

NATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE SCHEME OF OPERATION BLACKBOARD

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF OPERATION BLACKBOARD – SOME POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A. K. Jalaluddin

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION
NEW DELHI, INDIA



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A.K. Jalaluddin



**National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
New Delhi, India**

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FOREWORD

This study was commissioned by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, Government of India (GoI) to have an objective feedback on the existing schooling facilities in primary schools in the country, especially after the implementation of the Scheme of 'Operation Blackboard' (OB), which was launched in 1987-88. The OB aimed at providing basic schooling facilities in every primary school, that is, a minimum of two teachers, two all-weather classrooms, a varandah, toilet facilities for boys and girls separately and a set of teaching learning materials and blackboards in all those primary schools which did not have these basic facilities in 1986. The GoI was keen to have the impact of the scheme evaluated.

In view of various other interventions as a follow-up of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and its Programme of Action (POA), and especially after launching the internationally funded projects for school improvement and development programmes in early nineties, it was consciously decided not to undertake "evaluation" of the impact of the OB scheme, but to understand the implementation aspect in terms of progress in reduction of single or no classroom or no building schools, schools with less than two teachers, availability of teaching-learning-materials provided under the scheme and their utilisation by teachers and related aspects.

Accordingly, a comprehensive study was designed to meet the requirements of the GoI. A nation-wide sample survey was carried out to understand the ground realities of OB implementation covering all 25 states (as in 1999-2000) and 3 union territories, visiting over 7,700 primary schools located in community development blocks in the country. Selected thematic studies were undertaken to gain insights in the processes followed to manage financial assistance provided by the GoI to the states, building construction component, and selection and procurement of teaching-learning-materials. Special investigations were carried out to see the utility of special teacher training programmes and the relevance of instructional kits provided to schools in the context of primary stage curriculum. Case studies were attempted to understand field dynamics between and within school functionaries and stakeholders in village community,

related to education in general and primary school in the village in particular. A synthesis of 28 survey related studies on the implementation of OB Scheme in 25 States and three Union Territories as well as the highlights of selected theme based investigations have been documented and published as a series of documents. The present document forms a part of this series.

Findings of studies mentioned above were shared in a seminar held on 25-26 February 2002 which was attended by representatives of central and state government officials associated with the implementation of OB scheme, contributors of various studies undertaken and selected professionals active in education.

This report is the outcome of the efforts made by NIEPA in collaboration with various experts and institutions in the country to realise the above stated purpose of the study. But the sole credit for the execution of the multi-site study involving a wide range of partners goes to Professor Kuldip Kumar. Let me record my deep sense of appreciation and gratefulness to Professor Kumar for coordinating project implementation throughout the country and also for preparing the National Synthesis Report. In this work, he was ably assisted by Dr. Mona Sedwal, Project Associate Fellow, Mr. Hemant K. Panda, Project Assistant and Ms. Rajni Soni, Project Typist. I record my thanks to Director, NIEPA who took personal interest in the implementation of the Project and provided unflinching support at every stage of its execution. Being a national level study the total size of the Project was very large and involved huge administrative and financial operations at the Institute, which were carried out by NIEPA administration with a sense of commitment and efficiency. I acknowledge this full support and cooperation extended by the Registrar and other members of the Administrative Staff of NIEPA. Finally, let me also thank all the members of the in-house Project Advisory Group and other professionals who guided us from time to time in designing and implementing the Project.

R. Govinda

Project Director

PREFACE

The present thematic study, " A Critical Analysis of the Planning and Implementation of Operation Blackboard - Some Policy Implications", has been conducted as part of the National Evaluation of the Scheme of Operation Blackboard under the aegis of the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi.

The objective of the study was to critically analyse the process of conceptualisation and formulation of the above scheme in the overall context of development of education in India since independence and the broad framework of the 1986 Policy on Education and its Programme of Action. This study also includes a critical analysis of the Scheme document and the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the Scheme. The present thematic study took advantage of the preliminary findings of the countrywide sample survey conducted under the present overall National Evaluation.

Shri Sujai Kumar assisted me with the groundwork for the study and also in the preparation of Chapters 3, 4 and the annexures. Dr. J. D. Sharma and Ms. Sudakshina Mallik assisted in preparing Chapter 2. Hemant Panda and Ms. Juvena Jalal assisted me in editing the text of the report and Shri Mahesh Kumar in word processing the text at different stages. I am thankful to all of them.

I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to Professor B. P.Khandelwal, Director National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, and his colleagues, Professor R. Govinda, Professor Kuldip Kumar and Shri P. R. R. Nair for encouraging me to undertake the study and for providing me with all the facilities of NIEPA. I would also like to express my profound sense of gratitude to all the participants of our preliminary discussion sessions.

A. K. Jalaluddin

National Advisory Committee

1. Joint Secretary, Bureau of Elementary Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi (**Chairperson**)
2. Director, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
3. Director, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi
4. Director, Bureau of Elementary Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi
5. Dr. N.V. Varghese, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
6. Dr. J.B.G. Tilak, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
7. Head, Department of Pre School and Elementary Education (DPSEE), National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi
8. Dr. Daljit Gupta, Department of Teacher Education and Extensions (DTEE), National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi
9. Dr. A.B.L. Srivastava, Educational Consultants India Limited, New Delhi
10. Prof. Shyam Menon, Central Institute of Education (CIE), University of Delhi, Delhi
11. Prof. M.S. Yadav, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi
12. Prof. C. Seshadri, Mysore
13. Dr. R. Govinda, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi (**Project Director and Convener**)

State Representatives

Officer-in-Charge, Operation Blackboard Scheme in the States

In-House Project Advisory Group

Director, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi (**Chairperson**)

Director, Bureau of Elementary Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi

Prof. R. Govinda, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi

Prof. J.B.G. Tilak, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi

Dr. N.V. Varghese, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi

Shri P.R.R. Nair, Registrar, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi

Prof. Kuldeep Kumar (**Consultant for OB Evaluation Project and Convener**)

1. Joint Secretary, Bureau of Elementary Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi (Chairperson)
2. Director, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
3. Director, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi
4. Director, Bureau of Elementary Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi
5. Dr. N.V. Varghese, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
6. Dr. J.B.G. Tiliak, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
7. Head, Department of the School and Elementary Education (DSEE), National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi
8. Dr. Dattin Gupta, Director, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
9. Dr. A.B. Tiliak, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
10. Prof. S.K. Ghosh, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
11. Dr. R. Govinda, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi (Project Director and Consultant)

NIEPA Project Team

Dr. R. Govinda	Project Director
Prof. Kuldip Kumar	Project Consultant
Dr. Mona Sedwal	Project Associate Fellow
Mr. Hemant Panda	Project Assistant

State Representatives

Officer-in-Charge, Government of India, New Delhi

In-House Project Advisory Group

1. Director, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi (Chairperson)
2. Director, Bureau of Elementary Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi
3. Prof. R. Govinda, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
4. Prof. J.B.G. Tiliak, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
5. Dr. N.V. Varghese, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
6. Mr. P.R.R. Nayak, Senior Fellow, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi
7. Prof. Kuldip Kumar (Consultant for OB Evaluation Project and Consultant)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objective

With 20 per cent of the average share of the total assistance received by the states under the centrally sponsored education schemes taken together in the last decade, the OB scheme has become widely popular as the central government's most important intervention in the primary school sector. Despite some serious deviations from the prescribed norms for its implementation by state governments, the scheme has acquired disproportionately high visibility. No other central intervention in the field of education has received so much attention in the question hours of the Indian Parliament as the OB scheme. An analysis of the processes involved in the conceptualization and operationalisation of the Scheme and their policy implications deserves special attention in the context of the present overall National Survey on Operation Blackboard. This thematic study is a modest attempt to fulfill that objective.

Methodology

This study is essentially based on detailed analyses of (a) the OB scheme document, (b) related circulars issued from time to time, (c) reports of evaluation studies covering specific components like teacher training, (d) the present main evaluation survey in 28 states/union territories and related thematic studies and (e) annual reports of the Department of Education, MHRD, NCERT, DPEP-MIS, Reports of Ed.CIL and research publications related to the scheme. Several key persons were also interacted with who have been associated with the formulation and steering of the scheme at different levels of educational administration and technical support institutes.

Scope and Limitations

Based on an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the Scheme, the study provides an insight into the essential conditions to effect the success of new initiatives in primary education and indicates some policy imperatives to bringing about systemic

reform in primary education. The study also focuses on the possible new dimensions of the union government's facilitating role in this regard. Inadequacies of reliable time series secondary data, mismatch between the data received from different sources, large-scale turnover of the desk officers dealing with the Scheme at the central and state levels and poor institutional memory happened to be some of the serious limitations of the present study.

Findings

(a) General Perception

There is a general consensus that the OB scheme happened to be a major initiative to highlight the importance of the then New Policy on Education as an enabling instrument towards achieving the longstanding goal of Education for All. However, there is a wide divergence in the views on the instrumentality of achieving the above goal through the scheme. To many, the objective of improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom through the provision of the essential Teaching and Learning Materials(TLM) constituted the major thrust of the scheme. To others the construction of additional classrooms and the provision of the second teacher for single-teacher schools, which jointly account for the three-fourth of the Scheme money, constitute the major equity thrust of the scheme

It is to be noted that no serious observer of educational development in India has viewed the Scheme as an intervention for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of primary schools in terms of participation of local communities and enrolment of children, their attendance and retention or in terms of the improvement of teaching and learning practices and development of sustainable institutional capacity

Unlike most other centrally sponsored schemes, the OB scheme laid down detailed procedure to be followed by the state governments for implementation of the different components of the scheme. Standards were set for classroom construction, primary school plant, common teaching and learning aids, sports gear and primary school library. Special Orientation Programme for Primary Teachers (SOPT) was also

incorporated to familiarize teachers with the TLMs supplied and their use in the classroom.

Over emphasis on a standardized scheme for school improvement in a country like India, with varied geo-climatic, cultural and socio-economic-political diversities and lack of systematic on-line monitoring of the implementation of various components of the scheme by different wings of the state, without much needed co-ordination between them, appear to account for various observed shortfalls.

(b) Formulation and Management

While defining the 'Minimum Facilities' for an institution that could be called a primary school, no explanation was provided on how the formal and non-formal modes were to be interrelated and the mobility of children between the two would be facilitated and equivalency decided. There was also no indication how the OB Scheme would be coordinated with the on-going innovative primary education projects in the states.

In the formulation of the Scheme no reference was made to the major problems being faced by almost all states in rationalizing the deployment of teachers as a result of which the urban and semi-urban primary schools have gained surplus teachers at the cost of the rural schools, particularly those located in smaller and isolated habitations. Similarly, no notice was taken of the non-use of teaching and learning materials supplied to most schools in the past, while deciding to supply standard packages to all primary schools without any assured supervision and support services at the local level.

There was no attempt to revamp the system of management of each school by empowering the local communities in having a say in the running of the school and mobilizing resources for its maintenance as it had been the practice in the past when the local school was owned and maintained by the community.

An analysis of the achievement figures against the targets set in the different phases of the scheme reveals the following broad picture:

- Except in the case of the funds for the construction of additional classrooms, there has been no shortage of funds for additional teachers and the TLMs. The shortfall in the funds for construction component was essentially due to multi-source funding, delays in the flow of funds under the JRY and cost escalation.
- While the shortfall in the construction of additional classroom varies from state to state, almost all the states, except Leh district in J&K state, have been found to give low priority to the construction of toilets. The non-availability of funds might not have been the main consideration, the requirement of an easy and constant source of water and regular up keep of the toilets might have been more difficult to fulfill at the local planning and construction stage.
- In almost all the states, an overwhelming majority of the new classrooms have been found to be inappropriate from the point of view of design and inadequate from the point of view of quality of construction.
- The chronic problem of repair and maintenance of school buildings has remained largely unsolved despite the allocation and release of contingency funds.
- Most states have been utilizing OB scheme funds for an additional teacher, for single teacher schools, more to substitute the teachers who could otherwise be appointed under the state budget and not necessarily for strengthening their single-teacher schools. The present departmental recruitment is done without reference to the vacancy in any specific school in a block or district.

- Several earlier researches conducted to assess the effect of the supply of NCERT Science Kits, the UNICEF assistance and other state projects in 1970s and early 1980s indicated that such supply of uniform packages linked with a particular mode of teaching and learning does not, on its own, induce teachers to adapt them in their regular classroom transaction. In almost all cases, such kits remain either unutilized or grossly underutilized.

Analyses of the State Survey Reports under the present overall OB study reveal an interesting pattern. The states which have been found to be efficient in implementing the on-going state funded primary education development activities, also happened to be the states which have been utilizing the funds provided under OB scheme, in some cases bending the scheme norms.

The positive experiences in the implementation of the scheme by a few of the states may be characterized as :

- Establishment of working inter-departmental arrangements for construction of classrooms under the JRY
- Mobilization of local communities for augmenting resources and management of primary schools
- Effective decentralization of procurement mechanisms in respect of locally available items
- Linking the non-formal education and similar other schemes under an umbrella structure for management of primary schools
- Recruitment of female teachers

Despite some serious limitations in the formulation and implementation of OB scheme, it has generated a climate for a meaningful partnership between the central and state authorities for undertaking a process of joint planning and budgeting for elementary education development programmes. With the increasing recognition of the need for effective decentralization of educational planning and management and greater involvement of local communities, this partnership could be extended to the

lower levels of educational administration with focus on reforming the present system and evolving effective local structures and linkages. In this emerging organizational design, the positive experience of the Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh, popularly known as SECMOL in the remote and relatively little known region of Ladakh in the country is a living example. The partnership that emerged between NGOs, local communities and the state Department of Education under this initiative may emerge as an effective model linking micro and macro structures for sustainable educational development.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 National Evaluation of Operation Blackboard

In 1987, the Government of India launched one of the largest ever programmes for the Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE). In keeping with the recommendations of the National Policy on Education (1986), this programme was titled Operation Blackboard (OB1) and aimed at providing a well- defined minimum level of facilities to all primary schools in the country which lacked such facility.

To the uninitiated, the words "Operation Blackboard" may conjure up a vision of truckloads of blackboards winding their way into the remotest parts of India with military precision. To those in the know, however, OB signifies an investment in Primary Education that was unparalleled by past endeavours. Along with the efforts of the State Governments, the Centrally Sponsored Scheme was responsible for the contribution of over Rs. 4000 crore to the cause of primary schooling over a period of 10 years.

In recent years, the OB scheme has come under close scrutiny by observers and decision makers alike. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of comprehensive database and analysis which could provide an insight into the reach of the scheme and the problem encountered in its implementation so that it becomes possible to devise more efficient and feasible ways of carrying out planning and implementation of similar programmes in the future. With this in mind, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India (MHRD) sponsored a nation-wide study on the implementation and effects of this mammoth Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) in 1998.

1 There is no single official acronym for the scheme/project as it has alternatively been described as OB and OBB. This document will follow the former convention since the original scheme document published in 1987 also refers to the scheme as OB.

The study was taken up by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration and it primarily consisted of a detailed and comprehensive All-India Survey describing the extent of disbursement, usage, and impact of the components of the OB Scheme. Besides the survey, the National Evaluation of Operation Blackboard raises several issues on themes ranging from the implementation of the teacher education programmes under OB and the financial aspects of the scheme, to a detailed analysis of the design and quality of the construction of school buildings as part of the scheme.

The document is a critical analysis of the processes followed in planning and implementation of the Operation Blackboard and policy implications of the findings.

1.2 Rationale for Studying the Present Theme

The present thematic study looks at the general and specific objectives of the Operation Blackboard scheme. It tries to understand the context in which this scheme was formulated, which seems to be the basis for the original objectives of the scheme, and presents a framework of what the policy makers might have probably tried to achieve.

The *raison d'être* of this study becomes evident when one sees how the initial goal of the scheme was perceived differently by implementers, critics and evaluators alike. In fact, a critical analysis of the original scheme documents itself, will show how some of the broader and higher level qualitative ideas and objectives were distorted at the time of its drafting and lost in the detailed technicalities that became routine disbursement of funds over time.

While the parent project on the overall evaluation of Operation Blackboard and the All-India survey will provide valuable quantitative data about the successes and pitfalls of such a gigantic scheme, there is a need to look at the scheme in terms of some of the qualitative changes that the scheme was capable of, and to try and understand the reason why different aspects of the scheme “failed” or succeeded”

Regional variations in the implementation of Operation Blackboard have also been in evidence for some time now, and the absence of an inter-state analysis means that no lessons have as yet been drawn from these situations that can inform us about the institutional practices and climate that lead to better implementation of such schemes.

These reasons, along with several others make it necessary to look at the problem from a policy-research perspective with a view to achieving a greater understanding of the processes and thinking needed for bringing greater systemic reform in the field of Indian Primary Education.

With the advantage of hindsight and the benefit of a greater understanding of the problems of primary education in India, thanks to a growing awareness and concern for the field, this study also hopes to provide some indicators for improved planning and execution of such projects and initiatives.

1.3 Scope and Limitations of the Present Study

This section outlines the scope of the study with a detailed list of its objectives and its limitations.

The current study will analyse

- the background that led to the formulation of the OB scheme,
- the original scheme objectives and the deviations from them in the course of implementation of the scheme by the state, and
- the indicators that help us to suggest the scheme's achievements and failures.

Based on an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the scheme, the study would provide an insight into the essential conditions to effect the success of other primary education programmes and to suggest policy initiatives needed for bringing about systemic reform. It attempts to provide a relevant context for the formulation of

specific schemes and policy initiatives in the future to meet the growing challenge of education for all.

The study also focuses on the important dimension of the central role of the present system of educational management in the effective implementation of a policy. Rather than treating the implementation and management of policies as a separate problem, policy makers are expected to take stock of the known problems and to anticipate new ones before specifying the norms for their implementation and monitoring.

The main limitations of this study are:

- It tries to put forth a lot of ideas and propositions each of which could be a study topic by itself. Therefore, enough justice may not have been done to these topics.
- Poor quality of the secondary data available
- Change in the incumbents of different positions responsible for coordinating the scheme at the centre and states.
- Lack of authentic institutional memory, resulting in difficulty in tracing the processes and decisions behind the major events.

1.4 Methodology Adopted

In order to have a clear understanding of the background and context of the formulation of the Operation Blackboard scheme, several documents and reports related to the National Policy of Education (NPE) 1986, discussion papers that led to the NPE, the Policy itself, Programme of Action, the Reviews by various committees, Revised Policy and POA documents. Additionally, annual reports of the MHRD and reports of the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) and its various sub-committees provided an overall view of the direction that the Govt. of India planned for its elementary education programme.

Other documentary sources included previous reviews and evaluation studies of Operation Blackboard carried out by NCERT and other research organisations and

individuals. The District Level planning studies conducted as part of the NIEPA educational administration and planning course on the theme of OB and its planning and implementation provided a clearer picture of the way the educational system works at that level.

Parliamentary Questions proved to be a rich source of information on political perceptions and commitment to the scheme. These questions in turn led to other documents and references, which formed the set of source documents from which a clear picture of the scheme emerged.

While a detailed understanding of the past of the scheme was necessary, information about the current situation was obtained by interacting with the state-level co-ordinators of the present OB Survey who were familiar with the ground realities of the project and also provided their own interpretations of events and the processes that shaped them. This was supplemented by interviews conducted with personnel closely associated with the formulation and implementation of the OB Scheme specifically, and primary education in general. Direct observation of state level implementation of the scheme was also made possible in specific cases by field visits to the state education departments.

Apart from the OB scheme itself, several other basic education projects and their documents were also studied. These included EFA initiatives, the DPEP, as well as earlier supply based initiatives such as the provision of NCERT science kits under UNICEF Assistance project, etc.

2. A BRIEF POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

With the introduction of a new system of English education, the British left behind a legacy of mass illiteracy on the eve of independence. The Indian Constitution placed the ultimate responsibility of education with the State. Article 45 of the constitution enjoins that the state shall endeavor to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. School education generally remained a state subject in the immediate years following independence. Nevertheless, issues regarding the quality of education remained a matter of primary concern of the central or the union government, which had a clear responsibility regarding the national and integrative character of education, quality and standards, manpower planning, research and advanced study, culture, human resource development and the international aspects of education. However, the 43rd constitutional amendment in 1976 placed education in the concurrent list whereby it was envisaged that the states and the Centre would work in collaboration with regard to educational planning and administration.

2.2 The Lost Case of Basic Education Scheme

With reference to the existing Indian social reality, the Wardha scheme of education was advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, which also came to be known as Basic Education Scheme. The scheme attempted to relate education to life and work through a process of learning by doing. Education was to be imparted along with a combination of some handicraft or industry, which would also lead to a self-supporting component of the educational institutions. Basic education held a holistic and a child-centered perspective of the process of transmission of knowledge. In 1956, an assessment

committee on Basic Education was appointed which upheld its essential elements, however, calling for certain modifications of the scheme. While the Basic Education Scheme was subsequently abandoned as a vision of Indian Education, the concept of work experience, inspired through the scheme gradually gained greater currency in contemporary educational policy and planning.

2.3 Beginning Reform From the Top : Higher and Secondary Commissions

The period following independence, saw an accent on higher education. In November 1948, under the chairmanship of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a University Education Commission was set up. The commission recommendations dealt with standards of teaching disciplines and courses of study, post-graduate training and research , examinations, medium of instruction, rural universities and agriculture education.

In 1952, under the chairmanship of Dr. L. Mudaliar, a Secondary Education Commission was set up to inquire into the position of secondary education in India in all it's aspects and to suggest measures for improvement. The commission suggested the incorporation of citizenship training, inculcation of leadership qualities, character-building as long term goals of secondary education. It also suggested that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at the primary stage up to class IV or V, English and Hindi medium schools were also recommended at the middle stage. The Commission also suggested that two languages should be studied at the higher secondary stage of education of four year duration. However, it suffered from a major drawback of having neglected the financial dimension of reforms which impaired its potential for execution.

While there had been considerable quantitative expansion of educational infrastructure in India since independence, the issue of quality remained untouched. The trend of educational investigation remained confined to specific sub-sectors of

education in isolation. Consequently, an urge was felt to evolve a comprehensive perspective on the total education system in India

2.4 Education and National Development : Kothari Commission

In July 1964, government of India appointed Indian Education commission to advise the government on the national pattern of education, with Professor D.S. Kothari, Chairman of University Grants Commission, as its Chairman. The Report of the Commission, popularly known as Kothari Commission, entitled, Education and National Development, endorsed education, as the most relevant medium through which national development could be achieved. Educational and national reconstruction are organically linked to each other and education could play a crucial role in strengthening social and national integration, accelerating the process of modernization.

In order to achieve the goal of equalization of educational opportunity, the Commission recommended the establishment of a common school system that would cater to all sections of society living in a common neighbourhood. It also emphasized science education as compulsory subject in schools along with research in science as the most vital input for Indian's transition to the industrial age as well as for improvement in the quality of education. The Report recommended teaching of three languages in the school and prescribed a primary stage of seven/eight years and the subsequent lower secondary stage of three/two years of general education without any streaming. The higher secondary stage consisting of grades XI and XII to be located in the school with provision for streaming, including a vocationalised higher secondary stream. Among other things, it stressed the importance of imaginative initiatives for qualitative improvement of education and up-graduation of its standards.

As a result of discussions and debates on the recommendations of the Education Commission, a consensus emerged on several policy issues in the country. In line with it, the government of India facilitated the passage of a resolution on National Policy on Education in 1968. Some of the salient features of the resolution were:

- Equalization of educational opportunities
- Adequate educational facilities for rural and other backward areas, and removal of disparities in education
- Greater emphasis on education of girls
- Inclusion of science and mathematics education as an integral part of general education till the end of the school stage
- Adaptation of regional languages already being used at the primary and secondary stages as the medium of instruction at the university stage
- Adaptation of a uniform 10+2+3 pattern of education in all parts of the country
- Gradual increase in the investment in education so as to reach a level of expenditure of 6 percent of the national income.

After its inception in 1961, the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) undertook steps to develop a model curriculum and textbooks for the entire school education stage. In addition, conceptual literature was prepared on principles and procedures for the preparation and evaluation of instructional materials in different school subjects. Through their continued efforts, the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource, Government of India, NCERT and the Central Board of Secondary Education were able to popularize the 10+2 pattern of school education and its acceptance countrywide by mid eighties. Most states also adopted the national curricular framework developed by NCERT.

2.5 In Search of Room for Diversity : Iswar Bhai Committee

In March 1977, the Congress Party was defeated in the general elections and the Janta Dal formed the government at the centre. Under its aegis, a Review Committee was set up with Dr. Ishwar Bhai Patel, Vice- Chancellor of Gujrat University as its chairman. The syllabus and textbooks prepared by the NCERT for the new 10+2 pattern of school education were brought into the ambit of its study.

The report of the above Committee is noteworthy for many of its novel features. For the first time, the policy formally recommended learning to be organized through a system of non-formal centres along with the existing structure of formal education. Concomitantly, the context and arrangement of learning should also be flexible so as to suit the needs of individual learners or groups. The curriculum and the content of non-formal education was also expected to be designed keeping in view the requirements of diverse groups of learners and learning situations. However, there should be a minimal core of basic education in order to enable the products of the non-formal system to achieve a level of education comparable to that of formal education. The committee incorporated Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW) in the curriculum at all stages of school education. It also allowed for greater freedom to the state governments, Examinations Boards, other associated educational agencies and even individual schools to develop instructional material to suit their particular need, while treating the NCERT textbooks as models.

2.6 Education and the World of Work : Adiseshiah Committee

In October 1977, a Review Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras, to review the curriculum of the +2 stage of school education, with special reference to vocationalization of education. The Report, entitled “Learning to Do- Towards a Learning and Working Society” accorded greater priority to the location of schools in the rural sector. It suggested two broad learning streams at the higher secondary stage,

(a) the academic stream leading to university education, and (b) the vocationalized stream, to be distinguished from traditional vocational education courses provided in technical institutes. The latter was to be an integral part of a common stage of higher secondary education requiring the learning of a range of academic and skills-based para-professional courses.

2.7 In Search of Alternative Routes to Mass Education

During the seventies and the eighties, multipronged strategies were envisaged and adopted for UEE. The sixth five year plan (1980-85) accorded high priority to UEE as one of the major components of the Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) and sought to impart greater dynamism to the implementation of some crucial social and economic programmes. This inter alia included (I) intensified use of existing facilities, (ii) adjustment of schooling hours according to local conditions (iii) provision of new facilities which would be economically viable and educationally relevant and (iv) promotion of non-formal system of learning. Thus, the realization of the limitations of the formal education system led to the search for its alternatives and the consequent adoption of a non-formal education (NFE) scheme. The scheme was envisaged to be suited to the diverse education needs of children outside the formal school system with regard to (i) duration of learning, (ii) place and time of learning, (iii) the content of learning, (iv) methodology of instruction and evaluation, and (v) use of community resources that have potential for education.

In 1979-80, a centrally sponsored non-formal education programme was launched for children in the age group 9-14 in nine educationally backward states that had the bulk of non-attending children and drop-outs. Later on, the scheme was extended to Arunachal Pradesh. Under the scheme, grants were also given to voluntary organisations for running NFE Centres and to academic institutions for developing innovative and experimental non-formal education programme models with potential for replication. By the year 1997, about 7 million children were on roll in about 279,000 NFE centres and by 1998-99, 816 NGO's were running 58,788 NFE Centres. During

recent years, the stress remained on qualitative improvement of NFE. It is being reiterated that the advantage of NFE lay in its flexibility and adaptability to the needs of disadvantaged children.

2.8 Frustration with Cumulative Problems of Failure

A document, titled “Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective,” which was brought out by the Union Ministry of Education in August 1985, represented an important stage in the process of reviewing and reshaping the education system to meet the challenges of the future and also to improve its efficiency and the quality of education. The document contained an overview of the state of education and pointers for future initiatives, based essentially on the views and suggestions from educational planners, teachers, students, parents, intellectuals and ordinary citizens.

The document pinpointed the inadequacies of the present system and provided background for realistic policy making so that the limitations and constraints were appreciated while defining the tasks and formulating the measures for their implementation.² Some highlights of ground realities presented in the document in the context of endeavours for universalisation of elementary education, included the following:

- In comparison to many countries, India spent much less on education in terms of the proportion of gross national product. Resource gap for educational needs is one of the major problems.
- Many primary and middle schools did not have even the basic facilities. The Fourth All-India Educational Survey (1978) indicated that about 9 percent primary schools were without any building, and in the absence of school building, many other amenities would also not be available in these schools.

² * Ministry of Education; Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective, New Delhi, Government of India, Ministry of Education, 1985.



- At the all-India level, only 60.3 percent of the primary schools had blackboards.
- Only 29 percent of the schools had any kind of library facilities.
- About 46.6 percent of the schools had play grounds.
- In some states, even such basic amenities as drinking water were yet to be provided. 59.50 per cent schools had no drinking water facility.
- 35 percent schools had a single teacher to teach 3 or 4 different classes. These teachers could not possibly look after the diverse interests and variety of educational needs of the pupils.
- While budgetary allocations for planned expenditure for education had gone up substantially over the years, these had not kept pace with the growth in enrolments and rise in prices. As a result, the total expenditure per student per year, by the Central and the States, had declined in real terms. More than 90 per cent of the expenditure (in some states even more than 98 per cent) was on teachers' salaries and administration. Practically nothing was available to buy a black-board and chalks, let alone charts, other inexpensive teaching aids, or even pitchers for drinking water.
- Adequate thought should be given to raise funds for education. Now that education is a concurrent subject, the Central share for education would have to be enhanced; otherwise it would not be possible to establish any correlation between responsibility and performance.
- The object of education cannot be attained unless qualitative changes are introduced in the system. It has, however, to be recognized that these would not bear any fruit unless educational institutions attain a minimum threshold of essential facilities in terms of :

- buildings,
- black-boards,
- charts and posters,
- drinking water and bathroom facilities,
- laboratories,
- science kits and libraries; and
- minimum contingencies for organizing Socially Useful Productive Work, nature studies, games and sports, and cultural activities.

The nation-wide debate on the policy perspective reflected in the document “Challenge of Education” provided adequate and appropriate feedback and informational inputs for formulating the National Policy on Education.

2.9 Global Pressure and Renewed Initiative: New Education Policy 1986

While stating the policy perspective for universalisation of elementary education, the National Policy on Education(NPE) 1986 pinpointed the following two aspects as new thrusts in elementary education:

- a) universal enrolment and universal retention of children up to 14 years of age, and
- b) a substantial improvement in the quality of education.

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To achieve these objectives, emphasis was inter alia given on “School Facilities”. In this context, in para 5.7 of the NPE 1986 it is stated:

- Provision will be made of essential facilities in primary schools, including .
 - at least two reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather, and
 - the necessary toys, blackboards, maps, charts, and other learning materials
- At least two teachers, one of them a woman, should work in every school, the number increasing as early as possible to one teacher per class.
- A phased drive, symbolically called “OPERATION BLACKBOARD” will be undertaken with immediate effect to improve Primary Schools all over the country.
- Government, local bodies, voluntary agencies and individuals will be fully involved.
- Construction of school buildings will be the first charge on National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) fund.

2.10 Attempts to Reduce Gap Between Policy and Implementation

While elaborating the purpose of the Operation Blackboard (OB) Scheme, the Programme of Action (POA) for the NPE (1986) elaborated that this scheme would strive to ensure provision of minimum essential facilities in primary schools, both material facilities as well as learning equipment. According to the POA, the use of the word ‘Operation’ implied that

- there is an urgency in this programme
- that goals are clear and well-defined, and
- that Government and the people are determined to achieve those goals within a pre-determined time frame.³
- In regard to the buildings to be constructed, the POA mentioned the following points
- Construction of essential buildings for primary schools will be the first charge on NREP and RLEGP. Those resources will be supplemented by other appropriate schemes.
- Village Education Committees (VECs) will be required to give undertaking for maintenance and upkeep of buildings and other structures.
- Primary school-wise inventories of available structures will be prepared for systematic planning.
- Inexpensive building designs will be prepared keeping in view the agro-climatic conditions and utilizing locally available materials
- Steps will be taken for obtaining land for playgrounds

2. 11 Modus Operandi for Operationalisation of the OB Scheme

The POA 1986 provided a framework for operationalization of the OB Scheme. Highlights of the modus operandi suggested in the POA include the following:

³ Hereafter referred as OB

- Take the CD block/municipal areas as the unit and prepare a project for it on the basis of a survey of facilities in each school.
- Cover 10% block and urban schools in the same proportion in 1986-87 and 20% in 1987-88
- Conduct a quick survey by 30 September 1986
- Prepare project reports by 30 November 1986
- Set up Empowered Committees at district level to consider and approve the block/municipal areas projects.
- The funds for the OB would be provided by the Government of India to the State Governments on advance/reimbursement basis.
- The results of the Fifth All India Educational Survey will form the basis for block/municipal area projects for the remaining
 - 30% block/municipal area in 1988-89, and
 - 40% block/municipal area in 1989-90.
- Evolve procedures for procurement, supply and use of equipment keeping in view the special needs of primary schools and also ensuring that costs are kept low:
- Lay down specific norms
- Specify various items so as to ensure quality. This work will be done by the NCERT, in association with state agencies

- The capacity available in polytechnics, ITIs, secondary and senior secondary schools will be geared to produce the materials required by the school system, particularly under the OB Scheme
- Orient the teachers and encourage them to use these materials in day-to-day teaching. The mass training of teacher may be organized in the summer of 1987 and 1988. This will be reinforced by supervision by District Boards of Education and DIETs.
- Provision of at least one more teacher in single teachers schools will be attempted during the Seventh Plan. A detailed programme will be prepared for providing one teacher per class during the Eighth Plan. Efforts will be made to ensure that one of the two teachers in every school is a woman. (For this purpose local educated women may be selected and provided special training and opportunities for improving their qualifications. Such a strategy may also become necessary for male teachers in remote rural areas).

2.12 Launching of the OB Scheme

- a) Provision of at least two reasonably large rooms that are useable in all weather conditions with a deep verandah along with separate toilet facilities for boys and girls;
- b) Provision of at least two teachers, as far as possible one of them a woman, in every primary school,
- c) Provision of essential teaching – learning materials including blackboards, maps, charts, a small library , toys and games, and some equipment for work experience.

The coverage of OB Scheme included all primary schools run by Government, Local Bodies, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and recognized aided institutions. Its scope was confined to primary schools, that is, schools upto class IV or V depending on the educational structure in different states and UTs. Upper Primary Schools and Secondary Schools, even if they had classes I To IV / V, were not covered under the scheme.

According to the NPE 1986, all the existing primary schools in the country were target to be covered by the end of the Seventh Plan. However, due to several factors, the targets could not be achieved during that period.

The NCERT, in collaboration with states, planned and organized a Programme of Mass Orientation of School Teachers (PMOST) between 1986 and 1989 reaching 17.62 lakh teachers, a majority of them from primary schools. The PMOST was aimed at creating general awareness of school teachers, about diversified methods and materials for improving the quality of education.

2.13 Issue of Decentralization in NPE, 1986

The NPE, and POA 1986 called for an overhaul of the system of planning and management of education and decentralization through the creation of District Boards of Education as statutory authorities with comprehensive responsibility for planning and implementation of all educational programmes upto the higher secondary level.

At the local levels, according to the POA, heads of educational institutions, particularly at the primary and middle levels, were sought to be made accountable to the Village Education Committees, consisting of representatives of panchayats, cooperatives, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, universities, women, local development functionaries and parents.

2.14 Ramamurti NPE Review Committee on Decentralization

In 1992, the union government constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Ramamurti to review the 1986 National Policy of Education. The views of the NPE Review Committee on the issue of decentralization is reflected in the following paragraphs:

In the view of the Committee, decentralization is not a mere question of creating structures at different tiers. It is a matter of developing authority, functions and resources all the way down the structural hierarchy from the Centre to the states, from the states to the Districts, and so on down to the villages/ habitationsDecentralization should also be reflected in all aspects of monitoring and evaluation. The country being very large, marked by striking diversities in terms of language, culture and resource endowments, blanket policy options, strategies, investment patterns and targets do not help in tackling the problem of regional and sub-regional disparities. Any attempt to formulate a uniform policy for the educational development of the entire country on the basis of national averages for different parameters would be a method of perpetuating and even accentuating the existing disparities. The consequence of such an attempt would be that relatively more advanced regions would remain ahead of others.

While broad goals like universalization of elementary education and vocationalization of school education and education for illiterate adults have to be spelt out in terms of being achieved by certain deadline years, numerical target setting should not be an exercise flowing top downwards. Targets should be defined in a desegregated way at the base level, keeping in view the levels of educational development and disparities reflected therein, and thereafter collated at State level.

The on-going Centrally Sponsored Schemes in pursuance of NPE, 1986 have been under implementation only for two years. They may continue till end of 1992-93. The status of implementation of these schemes may be reviewed well before the end of that year. In any case, no new Centrally Sponsored Scheme may be initiated unless they be for the purpose of securing decentralization of education management at a grass-root level.

However, the above Ramamurti Committee Report recommendations, were not reflected in the revised Programme of Action of 1992, where greater stress was laid on strengthening the departmental structures of the state education departments, without taking note of their severe limitations in the implementation of the first phase of the Operation Blackboard Scheme by the state bureaucratic setup wherever it tried to do everything on its own.

3. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SCHEME DOCUMENT

3.1 The Poverty Alleviation Perspective

1. Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) has been one of the goals of educational development. Provision of free and compulsory education to all the children until they complete the age of 14 years is a Directive Principle of the Constitution. It is a part of the Minimum Needs Programme as well as the 20 Point Programme 1986. The National Policy on Education, 1986 also gives an unqualified priority to UEE. It resolves that it shall be ensured that all children who have attained the age of about 11 years by 1990, will have had 5 years of schooling, or its equivalent through the Non-Formal stream, and likewise, by 1995 all children will be provided free and compulsory education upto 14 years of age.

The opening paragraph establishes the background policy initiatives and directions that led to the formulation of the OB scheme. It recalls the constitutional pledge for providing 14 years of elementary education to all children. Similarly, the 20 Point Programme and the Minimum Needs Programme have also been cited. Both these programmes had a clear thrust on poverty alleviation and universalisation of elementary education and are clearly seen as equity measures - where the state plays its role in reducing the disparities between people by providing free elementary education for all children.

It also reiterates the Government's intention, through the NPE, 1986, to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) by 1995. This date is obviously unrealistic when one sees the past record of the state in primary education. Why then did the Government set such a date? A possible reason could be that political leadership has always been chary of acknowledging the difficulties of achieving the goal of UEE in the near future out of the fear that they might be attacked for trying to disown their constituted responsibility.

3.2 The Quality Angle

2. The policy embodies the concept of a National System of Education that lays emphasis on elimination of disparities in the educational system and on improvement in the quality of publicly funded schools so that whatever the socio-economic background of the student, upto a given level he/she has access to education of a comparable quality. The Programme of Action of the NPE aims at achieving the goal of a Common School System, through strategies that focus effort on the under-privileged, the economically weak, the educationally disadvantaged, and the areas that need special attention. It recommends that at the elementary level a child-centred approach will be adopted and the academic programme and school activities be built around the child. It also proposes measures to effect improvement in the quality of education through reform of the content and process of education, improvement in school facilities, provision of additional teachers, laying down minimum levels of learning, etc.

In stating the fact that the Government is trying to create institutions of comparable quality, there is an implicit admission of the fact that widespread disparities exist in the educational system as it is. These disparities exist not only between government and privately owned schools, but also among government schools of different kinds. Among the latter, there is a wide gap in the average quality of urban and rural schools, and even among such schools, the type of management affects the standard of the school.

The disparities exist at several levels such as

- physical level - in terms of buildings, furniture, basic toilet drinking water facilities
- teacher availability - the percentage of zero or single teacher schools in the country (among the govt run schools) was as high as --- in 1986
- content - what the children learn or are expected to learn. Private schools are often seen as a better option because they teach English.
- process - the learning and teaching methodologies and the atmosphere of the school.
- teacher qualification, motivation and development

While many believe that OB was meant to improve the quality of learning and therefore achievement scores etc, the primary function of the scheme was to remove these disparities and ensure equity in terms of access. This becomes clear when one sees the emphasis in the Scheme on the removal of disparities only at the level of physical facilities and teacher availability. The NPE, POA was expected to outline other steps to ensure quality through other measures.

3.3 The Standardisation Angle

OB attempted to ensure some kind of minimum standard for schools, but it effectively did this only for the lower 50% of all schools. The clientele of these schools are those who are around or below the poverty line since they cannot go anywhere else. The government felt its duty was towards this most deprived section of the populace, since they are the ones who use this system in the first place.

Why did the Govt not attempt to achieve the task of removing disparities for all schools? Perhaps it realised that this would have been a mammoth task - one that would definitely not be possible in such a short time. While talking about the creation of a common school system, the document also highlights the steps that the POA of the NPE propose for ensuring quality education.

3. The Union Government has accepted a larger responsibility with regard to maintenance of quality and standards of education at all levels of the educational process in the country. But the role and responsibility of the States remains undiminished - implementation of the NPE must engage the State's full attention, and it is only if the task of implementation is taken up with full vigour, persistence and a sense of urgency that the new schemes of quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement aimed eventually at a transformation of the whole system, have a chance of being realised.

The Union Government's greater role and responsibility is limited, however, to being an idea giver and a policy formulator. This paragraph suggests that the role of the States is primarily one of implementation - where they take whatever is provided in the scheme and implement it with "full vigour, persistence and a sense of urgency". Perhaps this is the key to the reason why the OB scheme failed to bring about a transformation of the whole system. Since the States were not involved in creating this scheme and were only asked to implement it, they obviously felt no ownership and therefore carried out the task at a very different level from what they could have otherwise done. Even in the states where the scheme was implemented efficiently, a sustainable system could not be created and they did not achieve as much as they could have with the limited resources at their disposal. If they had got truly involved and had in turn involved the community and the learners - the real stakeholders in the system - the whole situation of elementary education might have been very different.

The Centre's role of generating the NPE and then sharing it with the States was appropriate, since it was a very generic document and only outlined the problems and the priorities. The very idea of a common Programme of Action, however, is problematic since it is not diverse enough to look at the specific problems of all the states in one go. The States should have been provided with the basic Policy (which they indirectly helped formulate through their representatives at the Centre) and then asked to adapt their ongoing schemes and initiatives to the broad guidelines and priorities in the NPE, or introduce new measures where required. In this way, each State would have come up with its own plan that would have taken into account the diversity and local problems present. Examples of these will be highlighted wherever the scheme makes such references.

The OB scheme (and the POA of the NPE) attempted to define common norms and procedures for the whole country without taking into account the diversity that exists between states and even within states at times.

3.4 Absence of a Systemic Reform Approach

A scheme for "quantitative expansion" will do more of the same - i.e. it assumes that whatever is happening is on the right track for achieving whatever the goals are, and simply increasing the numbers will mean greater achievement. However, "qualitative improvement and a transformation of the whole system" is a totally different picture altogether and the casualness with which it has been mentioned indicates that the formulators of the scheme underestimated the complexities of the task.

All over the world, attempts to bring about systemic reform have found the going very difficult because such change requires a change in practices, a change in management style and most importantly, a personal change in the attitude of the members of the system at each and every level. There is a large volume of research available on precisely how difficult the process of this kind of change is, the kind of resistance that must be expected, etc. However, the steps outlined in this document and indeed in the POA themselves ignore the existence of such problems.

Systemic educational reform is a complex process which requires a detailed and holistic understanding of the problems involved. Rarely can a change be brought about in society without simultaneously attacking several closely inter-related problems. Throughout this document, it will be seen that although the OB scheme anticipated some of these problems, it totally ignored others. Even the problems highlighted have been treated as isolated entities which the scheme assumes can be solved by simply issuing a guideline or specifying a procedure.

3.5 Poor Data base for Implementation of the Scheme

4. The scheme for substantial improvement in facilities in primary education was symbolically named Operation Blackboard (OB). OB lays down the minimum level of

facilities to be provided in all primary schools which have been established so far, and it prescribes the minimum level of funding for all new primary schools to be opened in future.

What is laudable about the OB scheme is that for the first time, a document like the NPE made a firm and concrete commitment to the way it would improve Elementary Education in India without getting lost in a lot of policy rhetoric. The decision to increase the budget for elementary education from the existing 400 crore to over 2000 crore was taken by the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, and there was a need for proving the government's commitment by putting something on the ground quickly. The political leadership was keen to place the Policy and its Programme of Action (POA) in front of parliament as fast as possible in order to show its seriousness. While the NPE simply indicated the kind of basic minimum facilities to be provided (see below), the POA detailed it a little and the newly formed Bureau of Elementary Education in the MHRD came out with the details of the scheme in the form of this document. The key fact here is that all these documents and plans were formulated very rapidly and this haste may have led to the schemes / programmes being formulated yet again in a way which were reflective of the traditional style of functioning of the system of education.

A substantial improvement in facilities was attempted by specifying a certain minimum set of facilities that all primary schools were expected to adhere to. However, how could this minimum have been the same for all areas? For example, the minimum for a very large habitation with only one school and hundreds of children eligible for elementary education would have to be different from the minimum for a small area with a school and only about 20 children at the elementary education level. Since OB did not actually plan to open new schools, how could it hope to ensure any kind of equity or standard for the former case. This was the fundamental problem with the way the scheme was designed - it did not see the precise local needs and address them. Instead the scheme tried to define a uniform minimum level for all schools on the basis of aggregated data.

Perhaps the rationale behind this kind of thinking was that this was something to begin with. But it would have been more appropriate to plan the scheme systematically by basing it on some real data - which would have reflected the real need for resources and then providing those. In fact, seeing the failure of this kind of planning, other state specific schemes have since taken the initiative of conducting a comprehensive needs analysis which involves the community who will eventually benefit from the schemes, and tried to get them to 'own' these schemes

The MHRD realised the need for a needs analysis but by trying to get this data through the Fifth All India Educational Survey, it continued to treat the scheme in a highly centralised manner - where bureaucratic procedures get precedence over community motivation and initiative. The survey data was also not entirely accurate because although it is supposed to be the result of school-to-school canvassing, data is often collected from the Block and District education offices.

The scheme was not based on an accurate and comprehensive status analysis. Without a clear picture of the real deficiencies and problems with the system, drafting a new policy or scheme makes little sense. Ideally this picture should have come from a bottom-up exercise where the concerns and priorities of the communities were given a voice.

3.6 Components of the Scheme and their Limitations

The scheme had significantly been named "Operation Blackboard" by the then Minister for HRD PV Narasimha Rao in an attempt to convey a sense of urgency and necessity with the use of the word "Operation". The expectation was that the scheme would be well orchestrated and rapidly implemented and the word Blackboard also immediately brought to mind the image of school facilities. Thus, a more appropriate name would have been hard to find.

The minimum provisions were reviewed in the revised OB scheme in 1992.

There are three interdependent components of OB:

1. Provision of at least two reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather with a deep verandah alongwith separate toilet facilities for boys and girls.

This need for at least two rooms comes from the fact that if there are two teachers in the school (see component 2) then they cannot be expected to work in the same physical space. Classes had traditionally been held out-doors or wherever space was to be found but during harsh weather conditions, teaching activity would come to a stop. Thus having all weather areas was a necessity. Surprisingly no mention was made of drinking water, another essential amenity which is usually missing in Indian primary schools. In addition, the image of a primary school was largely influenced by British norms of what a school should be like. Alternatives that are more flexible and cheaper to implement such as the practice of providing a large covered platform as in Burma and other south-east Asian countries were totally ignored.

2. Provision of at least two teachers, as far as possible one of them a woman, in every school.
3. Provision of essential teaching and learning material including blackboards, maps, charts, a small library, toys and games and some equipment for work experience.

Work experience as it is envisaged in OB involves the use of tools such as hammers, screw-drivers, wood working tools etc. These are more appropriate at the secondary school level and the vision of what work experience should be for primary school children is very different.

4. OB is to be implemented in municipal areas as well as villages. Its scope is confined to primary schools (viz. Schools upto Class IV or V depending on the structure in different States/UTs); upper primary schools and secondary schools, even if they have Classes I to IV/V, are not to covered under this scheme.

By confining the scope to primary schools alone, the assumption is that primary schools which are part of upper primary schools are better off in terms of basic facilities. Aggregated data for most upper primary schools may show the existence of more rooms and more teachers but this is certainly not true for all such schools. Again, the scheme seems to have been formulated without accounting for variation among such schools where the primary sections may actually have only one teacher to look after them etc.

3.7 Ambiguity in the Interpretation of 'Minimum Facilities'

The next section specified what exactly was meant by "all primary schools" -

5. The coverage of OB is to be extended to all primary schools run by Government, local bodies, Panchayat Raj institutions and recognised aided institutions. It needs to be kept in mind that this scheme is meant for educational institutions which have remained deprived of facilities and resources in the past.

Of significant interest is the fact that while the Centre laid down these minimum facilities, it did not consult the states in the formulation of these minimum facilities. When the scheme was eventually passed on to the states, the State Level Empowered Committees were responsible for the procedures to be followed in the implementation of OB, and at a later stage were even responsible for choosing the Teaching Learning Materials. However, the 'minimum facilities' with respect to the buildings and the teachers were never discussed on a national scale, and local alternatives to these minimum facilities were not considered either. No consensus seems to have been generated through the nationwide debate and discussion about Indian Education prior to the formulation of the NPE, with the pattern of single teacher schools popularised in the past by invoking images of the village school master (guruji) was discarded with the realisation that such a system is too fragile (for example, all schooling comes to a halt when this teacher falls ill).

In the entire scheme, there is no mention of the role that NFE has to play or the kind of relationship OB has with NFE. If the objective of the GOI had been to provide a

Common School System, then how does NFE fit into this picture - because NFE centres require only a single instructor and can be held in any sheltered place - even the verandah of a big house. Why aren't there any "minimum requirements" for NFE centres as well since they are also meant to provide access to elementary education. The other difference between NFE (and other such schemes like the EGS) and OB is that the former involves greater community participation and responsibility. The OB scheme could have taken a leaf from the NFE book and tried to incorporate much greater community interest, not only in the construction and maintenance of school buildings but also in the curriculum, learning process, teacher accountability, etc.

3.8 Non- Critical Selection of Blocks and Municipal Areas

6. Over the next 2-3 years OB was implemented in the entire country. It was , however, to be done in a phased manner, beginning with 20% of the blocks and municipal areas in 1987-88, 30% in 88-89 and 50% in 89-90. The first step in implementation of OB was to select CD blocks/municipalities within a year of implementation. In the selection of blocks, the following considerations were to be kept in view:

- No district may be left out.
- Additional blocks may be given in the reasonable proportion to the total number of blocks in a district.
- Preference in the selection of blocks should be given to those which are educationally disadvantaged and have concentration of persons belonging to scheduled castes and educationally disadvantaged scheduled tribes and minorities.

The State Governments were to lay down certain other criteria in the process of selection. The governing consideration was greater people's participation, possibilities of success of the scheme and the overall strategy as spelt out in NPE.

The phasing of the whole scheme and the deadlines defined here are highly over-optimistic and do not seem to be based on any idea of the reality of the situation. The amount of money budgeted for the scheme for these years was also visibly inadequate as a rough calculation will show.

Although the last part does mention people's participation, it does so without elaborating the procedure of how such participation could actually be achieved. This is not something which can be ordered into existence. By allowing the states to formulate their own plans for how to bring about such changes, the Union Government definitely provided a great deal of flexibility. But it should have anticipated that States do not have any mechanism to undertake such exercises on their own.

The main point stressed here and in later sections is that the need of the hour is not more guidelines and conditions which are not enforceable, but increased sensitivity towards a problem and the capacity to tackle it democratically, with community support and ownership.

3.9 Absence of a Capacity Development Component

Building this capacity and providing technical support are expected to be the main thrust areas of the Union Government. National level Institutions like NCERT and NIEPA are expected to assist the Union Government to fulfil this role. However, these institutes are often unable to provide this kind of support because of their preoccupation with other commitments.

7. The criteria for selection of municipal areas will have to be worked out by the State governments themselves. It is suggested that smaller municipal areas should be treated as a single unit and a percentage of such areas in a District may be taken up. As far as large cities are concerned, implementation of the scheme in the first year should be restricted to 20% of the municipal wards.

Similar details are dotted throughout the scheme document. They reflect a desire to spell out everything to the minutest detail which should not be the aim of a Centrally Sponsored Scheme like OB.

8. Survey of existing facilities is to be undertaken as soon as selection of CD blocks and municipal areas has been completed. The proforma for survey has been evolved in consultation with NCERT and has been communicated to the states separately.

A survey is to be conducted *after* the blocks and municipal areas have been selected. Logically, the selection should have been based on the survey since the scheme sought to address those areas first which were the most deprived. The proforma too was evolved at the centre and passed on to the states in a typically top-down manner.

9. There are two distinct categories of survey under OBE. One, in respect of 20% CD blocks and municipal areas in which OB is to be implemented in 1987-88; and two, survey of the remaining 80 percent of the CD blocks and principal areas in which OB will be implemented in the next 2-3 years. As far as the first category is concerned, viz. 20% of the blocks and municipal areas, special survey drives have to be undertaken. In respect of the second category, viz., the remaining 80 percent of the blocks and municipal areas, the survey sheets will be canvassed along with the Fifth All India Education Survey. In respect of this category NCERT has issued detailed instructions for the survey staff.

As already mentioned, this exercise could have been a powerful vehicle for community mobilisation and awareness building. By carrying out micro-planning strategies such as local and school mapping exercises (for example as in Lok Jumbish and the BEP), the concern and energy of the real stake-holders could have been tapped and used effectively. As it is, there are reasons to believe that the AIES data are not totally accurate.

10. The reference date for survey under OB is the same as for the Fifth All India Educational Survey, viz., 30 September 1986. This date will also hold good for determining the number of single teacher schools, which have to be provided second teacher under OB.

11. The results of the survey have to be compiled into parts; Part I - relating to the requirement of additional teachers for the single teacher schools. Part II - the remaining data, viz., availability of buildings and teaching/learning materials to be compiled with the form of a block project. The block project will include blockwise and municipality-wise consolidated data - existing facilities as well as deficiencies. The block project will also indicate the measures taken for involvement of teachers, local communities and necessary assurances regarding land, fencing, maintenance, replacements etc. Mention should also be made in the block projects regarding appointment of women teachers and the measures taken for ensuring that the teachers appointed will in fact serve at the place of their posting.

3.10 Lack of Enabling and Regulatory Instruments

Citing problems such as teacher postings in the wrong places, non-involvement of teachers, communities, etc, which had never been addressed till then, is one of the strengths of the OB scheme. However, just mentioning them does not solve any problem. The scheme does not list the pre-conditions which must be present for such actions to take place.

Although the scheme mentions the problem of teachers joining at places other than their postings, it totally ignores other problems such as redeployment of teachers (from areas with surplus teachers, to areas with fewer teachers). Even this redeployment is never effective, since the root cause of why there were surplus teachers in first place (teachers don't want to be posted to remote areas far from their homes) is not addressed.

This strengthens the case for NOT specifying everything to such a high level of detail in the Scheme document and instead creating greater awareness within the state and building the state's capacity to formulate its own action plan to deal with such problems.

Several conditions and "safeguards" were built in to the scheme as responsibilities of the state or the community but without any regard for what would happen if these

conditions were violated. This is precisely what happened, and because the actors knew they would get the money anyway, they proceeded to do things exactly as they had done in the past.

There are qualitative indications from field visits suggesting that most states too blatantly violated the centre's norms regarding the spending of the OB grant and their own commitment to providing the minimum facilities in future. OB money was spent on paying existing teachers salaries while showing the centre that new teachers had been appointed, materials purchased etc. These issues obviously need further probing.

3.11 Construction of School Buildings

12. No separate funds are being provided under OB by the Ministry of HRD (Department of education) for construction of primary school buildings. Some State Governments were provided funds by the Eighth Finance Commission for construction of school buildings and steps should be taken for timely and planned use of those funds. National Rule Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) have considerable funds in all states/UTs. A decision has been taken at the highest level to give high priority under the schemes to construction of primary school buildings. This decision has been incorporated in the manual recently brought out by the Ministry of Agriculture (Department of Rural Development), Government of India. This priority has been reiterated by the Department of Rural Development vide their Secretary's instructions to State Governments in his DO letter No. M.20042/27-85 RLEGP dated 30-7-87.

Putting construction of school buildings as the highest charge is an excellent idea but there are no ideas for enforcing this directive.

The Co-ordination Committee set up by all State governments under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary to oversee implementation of NPE should be able to ensure that

adequate funds become available under NREP/RLEGP for the programme of construction of primary school buildings. It may be clarified that the essential parameters of NREP/RLEGP will remain unchanged even when these programs are used for OB. The following further clarifications are given in this regard:

(A) Necessary land for construction of school buildings, including land for games and sports, has to be provided by the local community.

(B) The local community, preferably village education committees, have to give a formal undertaking that they will take responsibility for repair and maintenance of the building.

(C) The local community has also to take responsibility for an appropriate fencing around the school compound. It could be a pucca wall or hedge or barbed wire, but sufficient to prevent the school compound becoming a thorough fare for humans and cattle.

The idea of community participation as it has been described here follows simplistic top-down model. State governments have been exited to form committees and to ask the member to do what they want them to do. The desired strategy would have been to encourage these communities first to engage themselves in meaningful dialogue about what they wanted and how they were willing to go about it. The state could provide the resources and technical support required, but the initiative must have come from the people themselves. The Village Education Committee must also have greater powers along with the know how to use these powers.

Here and in later sections, the OB scheme assumes that the VEC can and will carry out the instructions specified. The assumption is that the VEC is a well organised, concerned, highly motivated and effective local body, but this is not true. The first step towards having effective local and participatory committees is to build the capacity of these committees. Then they should be assigned increased responsibilities which they will be in a better position to carry out.

3.12 Absence of Child –Friendly School Design

(D) The proportion between labour and material component under NREP and RLEGP is 50:50. If the requirement of material is more than that, it will have to be provided by the State governments, local bodies and the village community. In the case of NREP, it may be possible to lump the work of primary school building with other works, such as social forestry and deficiency of village tank, and thereby ensuring 50:50 ratio between labour and material components.

(E) Each of the rooms reconstructed should be approximately 30 sq m in area and the verandah of approximately 9-10 feet wide. Even if there are two rooms in existence at present, but their area is much less and they are not satisfactory, new rooms may be constructed.

If this is the general idea of the space per classroom, then, following internationally accepted norms, each classroom can seat at most 30-35 children - without furniture. This does not tally with the average student teacher ratio of 40:1. In many places, the number of children in a school is much higher. A building design that emphasises rooms like these is physically isolating and restricting and definitely not suitable for any kind of activity in the classroom.

Possible solutions would have been to simply provide a large covered platform and allow the local community to adapt it to their needs. Flexible partitions and temporary rooms which can be rebuilt as necessary would have been a better idea. This way there would be a greater need for local level initiative and participation which is what needs to be stressed to get the community involved.

(F) Provision of separate toilet for boys and girls must form part of the construction activity. Toilet should be so constructed that they inculcate desired toilet habits among

children and the construction and maintenance of toilet should be such that it should be possible to keep them clean.

The scheme says toilets should be constructed and maintained, but this has been one of the worst implemented aspects. In most schools where the toilets exist, they are blocked and unusable because of the lack of water.

(G) Each state government should get good architectural design made for construction of primary school buildings. These designs should be modular, in that they should provide scope for expansion of the building programme. Every effort should be made to utilise local materials and keep the cost of building low. They should be adequate, without being ostentatious and should merge well with the village environment. It should also be ensured that there is built in space for storage of equipment, and well plastered blackboards should also form part of the structure itself, in the rooms as well as at both ends of the verandah.

(H) Several states are faced with an acute drought situation this year and considerable expenditure is likely to be incurred on provision of relief works to drought affected families. The possibility should be explored of the labour complement on school buildings being met out of these relief works if the funds for material components can be found from some other source under the control of the state government, the local bodies, all village communities.

13. As far as municipal areas are concerned the State governments will have to make necessary arrangements for school buildings. It may be possible in some municipal areas to allocate municipal funds for this purpose. At some places it may be feasible to levy education cess on property or a general municipal tax. At some places, it may be possible to raise donations from charitable and philanthropic persons/organisations. Yet another possibility is to take additional space on rent. The central government would not be able to take any responsibility in respect of buildings for the municipal areas.

The suggestions for finding funding from others sources is excellent and much needed.

3.13 Loopholes in the Utilization of the Second Teacher

14. The percentage of single teacher schools has been going down in the country. However, in some states the number of such schools continues to be alarmingly large and it adversely affects educational standards. This problem is, however, confined to rural areas. A second teacher will be provided as a part of OB for all single teacher schools in the 20% CD blocks in 87-88, in another 30 percent blocks/municipal areas in 88-89 and in the remaining in 89-90. The relevant date for determining the number of single teacher schools, as already clarified above, is 30 September 1986.

The existence of a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) which provides money for additional teacher appointments has ended up being counter-productive because its mechanism allows states to get away with not spending even what it would have normally spent. From a state financial planning point of view this is a matter of serious concern because Central funds are used for something the state should be spending as part of its non-plan budget. Since the liability of the new teacher appointments was to be transferred to the states after the plan period, the state would now have to look for additional money to meet its earlier non-plan commitment as well.

The following considerations are to be kept in view while implementing this component of OB:

- The state government will need to give a categorical assurance that all new primary schools opened will be provided with two teachers.
- To the extent possible, all new teachers to be appointed should be women. It will be advisable if every school has at least one woman teacher. However, if women teachers cannot reside in the village where they are posted or cannot easily commute there, the second teacher may also be male, but corresponding increase in the number

of women teachers should be made in urban areas or in other locations where it is possible to increase the number of women teachers.

- In the appointment of teachers, spatial considerations need to be kept in view. If trained teachers belonging to remote rural areas are available they should be given preference, without disturbing the broad policy regarding appointment of teachers. Likewise, preference should be given to trained teachers belonging to SC/ST.
- In some states/UTs there are a number of trained teachers awaiting appointments for several years. In all cases where persons trained 2-3 years prior to their appointment (and if they were not working as teachers in the intervening period) are appointed, they should be provided a suitable refresher course, say of one-month duration. Necessary preparations for this purpose should be made immediately. The material prepared by NCERT for the massive summer vacation teacher training programme could also supplement other resources.

The teacher preparation and development component of the Scheme as reflected in the above provision does not address the problem of teacher effectiveness. Providing refresher courses which are not effective is hardly the solution for improving classroom practices. This whole issue should have been thought of in conjunction with the entire system of teacher training and the provision of frequent in-service local level technical support. This in turn requires a broader view of the role of DIETs, SCERTs etc and the need for a decentralised technical support system which seems to be missing here. The present system cannot solve this problem with just one sub-inspector at the block level.

Any change in one part of the system must be accompanied by change in the dependent and related parts such as teacher training, pedagogical support, etc.

The overall scheme or vision should have looked at:

- A survey which involved community participation, looking at developing new management practices and capacity building for democratic and well planned decision making

- Pedagogical change in the form of School specific instructional management and site-based planning and teacher reorientation.

3.14 Ineffective Traditional Classroom Practises not Addressed

15. The essential facilities in primary schools have been spelt out in Annex I. This list has been prepared after a great deal of examination and should hold good for all schools throughout the country. However those State governments/U.T administrations which consider it essential to make departure from this list may do so provided that they can give sufficient justification thereof and it does not lead to increase in costs.

The list of materials specified is highly generic. These materials can be used in a variety of different ways. Their primary purpose was to create a healthy environment for all round development of children in a system where school had otherwise been associated only with working through a set of textbooks.

However, it is interesting to note how a majority of people related to OB, including its implementers, mid-term evaluators and current survey co-ordinators seem to expect that these materials would lead to an improvement in quality and that should be reflected in increased achievement scores of the children, a higher completion rate, etc. These impressions are based on their expectations and not on the first-hand experience of the ground level reality in small rural primary schools, where very little meaningful teaching and learning takes place. An appropriate use of some of the materials like picture charts and cards could have been visualised for creating a joyful learning environment in the beginning.

16. There is an insistence under OB on purchase of material of good quality. The past experience shows that the existing financial procedures oblige educational administrators to go in for the cheapest material, which is generally of substandard quality. Under OB specifications are being worked out in respect of various items which lend to such disruption. The Bureau of Indian Standards (formerly known as

Indian Standards Institution-ISI) has been requested to lay down specifications in consultation with educationists and classroom teachers. Meanwhile State governments may work out their own specifications which can be used for 1987-88.

This standardisation exercise was the first of its kind in the field of education and would have served an important purpose - that of allowing purchase and procurement of materials from anywhere and still ensuring that it would be of a certain minimum quality. However, this initiative was countered effectively by the lack of co-ordination at the District level, where the person receiving the materials had no way of checking whether the materials received were of the specified standard.

3.15 Underestimation of Past Problems of Failure

17. As soon as possible the work experience programme in upper primary schools and secondary/higher secondary schools should be modified to manufacture as many items required under OB as possible. As a part of work experience the students should also be trained to produce material of good quality and dilution of specifications should not be permitted. Even polytechnics and ITIs should be encouraged to set up manufacturing units as a result, under "earn-while-you-learn" projects.

While on the face of it this seems to be an appropriate idea - with both sides gaining in the bargain, the scheme has failed to take into account the basic fact that the work experience programme is defunct in almost all institutions. They have no tradition of producing quality materials on demand. This exposes the "out-of-the-blue" nature of this scheme and the lack of information about the reality of our schools.

18. The responsibility for replenishment of materials will have to be borne by the State governments or the local bodies as the case maybe. Funds for this will have to be provided in a systematic manner and while making proposals for sanction of funds under OB State governments would be expected to give necessary indications in this regard.

The use of the word replenishment implies that this list of materials is the ultimate list and all future efforts must be made to maintain it. There is no idea of seeing the school as a unit of continuous innovation and providing it with constant academic support and supervision at the local unit of administration. An interesting extension of the idea of replenishment and the provision of Rs 500 every year is that for a list with an overall cost of Rs 7200, every item can be replaced approximately once every 15 years.

19. In addition to bringing about necessary changes in the procedure for purchase of instructional learning material, it will also be necessary to reorient the teachers and to build an atmosphere in which teachers use the material provided under OB and also improvise instructional material on their own initiative. This will have to be built into all programmes of teacher education-pre service as well as in service. In addition small simple booklets should be brought out by SCERTs to facilitate proper use of this material. It will also be necessary to make necessary changes in the financial/accounting procedures and audit requirements.

The problem with this is that all these schemes for teacher training and support, materials, evaluation, etc. are seen in isolation. A better way of going about this exercise might have been to create a highly effective and mobile team at the centre that could have provided support to the states in their efforts to plan a system for improving teacher training. This capacity building exercise is much more important than the publishing of booklets which no one follows anyway.

3.16 Non-Enforceable Fund Utilization Norms

20. OB is a centrally sponsored scheme. No separate funds have been provided under it for construction of primary school buildings in rural areas. It is to form part of NREP,

RLEGP and other appropriate schemes, including special area development schemes such as tribal sub plans, hill areas development programme, border area development programme, etc. Funds for appointment of second teachers in single teacher schools and for purchase of instructional/learning material will be provided by the central government on 100 percent basis upto the end of the seventh plan. It shall be necessary for the State governments to draw, and adhere to, a detailed plan for construction of primary school buildings as envisaged in OB.

The language used in the scheme make the functioning arrangement look like that of earmarked provisions. It seems that the Union Government has done this in view of the past experiences, when state governments diverted funds received under centrally sponsored schemes for other purposes. However, by specifying all these conditions the situation has not been made any better, especially because there is no mechanism for ensuring adherence to them.

The above critical analysis of the Operation Blackboard Scheme highlights the importance of the policy implications of the design and the suggested mode of implementations of the scheme. While it is generally appreciated in the government that a policy initiative should try to address the contemporary educational problems and issues, and this was demonstrated through the creation of an environment of public debate on education on the basis of the document, "Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective". However, there seems to be very little appreciation of the fact that a good policy should also address the issues related to the problems of failure of implementation of the past policy and to incorporate new strategies and instruments to overcome these problems.

It is now widely believed that any kind of qualitative transformation of the system of education in India would require the government to come out of the traditional mode of governance where procedures and rules are defined meticulously and instruction issued with the expectations that they will be fulfilled, Development in any community in the midst of a rapidly changing economic, social and technological environment necessitates a greater understanding of human dynamics and the

involvement of the people concerned. This calls for adapting a participatory approach to the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of educational development programmes with an open mind.

Annexures A,B,C & D provide the summary of the discussion which provided the basis for the chapter.

4. TRIANGULATED VIEWS OF PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

4.1 Major Events, Functionaries and their Roles

In his first broadcast to the nation as Prime Minister in January 1985, Rajiv Gandhi declared that education would get an added impetus in his new government to provide national cohesion, work ethic and prepare India to cope with the rapidly changing global environment. He subsequently asked the Ministry of Human Resource Development to initiate the drafting of a new education policy.

After conducting a series of brainstorming exercises with senior officers of the Ministry, NCERT and NIEPA, Anand Swarup, the then Education Secretary, decided to have a quick analysis of the contemporary educational scene in the country. A.K. Jalaluddin, Joint Director of NCERT was appointed to prepare the document. This background document, titled, "Educational Database for Policy Formulation", provided a basis for the drafting of the Ministry's document, "Challenge of Education- A Policy Perspective", almost single-handedly by Anand Swarup.

The "Challenge" document was released by the Ministry on 20 August 1985 in English and Hindi.

Since the drafting group responsible for the "Challenge" document analyzed the problems of failure of proper implementation of the past education policy initiatives in a very frank and critical way, at some stage, there was some uncertainty about its publication by the Ministry. However, K.C. Pant, the then Education Minister took a firm stand to release the document for national debate after consultations with Rajiv Gandhi.

The Ministry encouraged state governments, universities and other learned societies and voluntary agencies to hold seminars, taking the issues raised in the "Challenge" document and NIEPA was asked to collate the reports received from the organizers of

these seminars. P.V. Narshima Rao, who succeeded K.C. Pant was the first Minister responsible for the newly constituted omnibus Ministry of Human Resource Development convened a conference of state Education Ministers on January 23-24, 1986. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi addressed the Conference to develop a consensus on the major formulations to be incorporated in the proposed policy.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development made a presentation of the draft of the new policy on education to the Prime Minister and other senior Union Ministers in April 1986.

The final draft of the New Policy on Education was placed in the Parliament in early May 1986. It was debated and adopted by Lok Sabha on 8 May and the Rajya Sabha on 12 May, 1986.

The Operation Blackboard Scheme was mentioned in the NPE.

23 Task Forces were constituted by the Ministry to analyse the NPE. One of these Task Forces was on Elementary Education, Non-Formal Education and Operation Blackboard.

A Programme of Action (POA) drafted on the basis of the reports of the above Task Forces was discussed by the Control Advisory Board on Education (CABE) on 1-2 August, 1986 and presented to Parliament on 8 August 1986. CABE constituted 9 committees to lay guidelines for implementation of NPE. The progress in the implementation of NPE was first reported to Parliament in August 1987.

CABE committee on elementary education constituted to oversee OB/NFE implementation held a meeting on 3 Nov. 1987 to discuss the progress of OB problems of funds from National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) for construction of school buildings. The

meeting also decided that 2 classrooms would be state government's responsibility and it could not be dispensed with

A Conference of State Education Secretaries for the preparation of State Education Ministers was held on 13-14 Feb. 1988. The Education Ministers Conference was held on 25-26 April, 1988.

8 July 1988 a meeting of CABE was held which recommended the following:

- Need to continue central assistance for OB in the 8th Plan (initially it would have finished by 89/90)
- Construction of buildings out of NREP/RLEGP funds
- Forming a pool of resource persons for teaching/learning materials/strategies.
- 17/18 June 1988 Education Secretaries/Empowered Committees/Directors Meeting discussed
- Micro-planning
- OB on high priority.

12 September 1988 a meeting on UEE was held.

30 June and 30 November 1988, two Progress Reports on NPE were circulated.

6-7 June 1989, CABE Meeting in Delhi recommended continuation of all CSS (Centrally Sponsored Schemes) on elementary education.

The following CABE Regional Workshops were held to facilitate the preparation of each state's own POA for implementation of NPE:

29-30 October 1992

20-21 January 1993

28-29 January 1993

17-18 February 1993.

Anil Bordia, who succeeded Anand Swarup as Education Secretary played a crucial role in mobilizing support from the states and accelerating the implementation of the OB Scheme.

4.2 Changes in Government and Expansion Without Course Correction

In November 1989, National Front government came to power and appointed a Committee, headed by Ramamurti on 7 May 1990 to review the 1986 Education Policy.

The Ramamurti Committee Report was tabled in the Parliament on 9 June 1991. The Report very strongly suggested effective decentralization of the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes, including the OB Scheme.

However, the Ramamurti Committee Report was shelved when the Narshima Rao government came to power in June 1991. The new government constituted a CAGE Committee on Education Policy in January 1992 under the chairmanship of Janardhan Reddy.

In its Report, the Reddy Committee suggested further expansion and extension of all Centrally Sponsored Schemes, including OB initiated under the 1986 NPE.

4.3 Revision of the 1986 NPE

The 1986 Policy on Education was revised on the basis of the recommendations of the Reddy Committee in 1992. The new thrust in elementary education, according to the revised policy included:

- Provision will be made of essential facilities in primary school

- The Scope of Operation Blackboard (OB) will be enlarged to provide three reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather, and blackboards, maps, charts, toys, other necessary learning aids and school library.
- At least three teachers should work in every school, the number increasing as early as possible, to one per class.
- At least 50 per cent of teachers recruited in future should be women.
- The Operation Blackboard will be extended to Upper Primary Stage also.
- Construction of school building will be a priority charge on Jawhar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) funds.

4.4 The Expanded 1992 Programme of Action (POA)

The POA4 (1992) further elaborated the provisions of the Revised Policy Formulations (1992) in the context of the modified OB Scheme. These are highlighted below:

The modified OB will contain the following three sub schemes:

- (i) Continuation of ongoing OB to cover the entire remaining primary schools especially those in SC/ST areas.
- (ii) Expanding the scope of OB to provide three teachers and three rooms to primary schools wherever enrolment warrants them; and
- (iii) Expanding OB to Upper Primary School to provide:
 - at least one room for each class/section,
 - a Headmaster-cum –Office room,
 - separate toilet facilities for girls and boys,
 - essential teaching learning equipment including a library.

4 MHRD; National Policy of Education 1986: Programme of Action 1992, New Delhi, Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, 1992.

- at least one teacher for each class/section, and
- a contingency grant for replenishment of items, consumables and minor repairs, etc.

4.5 An Added Dimension of the Quality of Implementation

The POA 1992 suggested the following measures to be taken to improve the quality of implementation of OB:

- Teachers will be trained in using the OB teaching-learning materials under a specially designed teacher training programme.
- State Governments will make provision for breakage and replacement of equipment.
- Enough flexibility will be provided for purchase of teaching learning materials relevant to the curriculum and local needs.
- At least 50% of the teachers appointed will be women. This will have a positive impact on girl's enrolment and retention.
- Whenever Micro-planning projects are taken up, OB will form an integral part of Micro Planning.
- As far as possible, low cost and locally available designs relevant to local conditions will be adopted for school buildings. Nirmithi Kendras (Building Centres) and local institutes will be associated in this endeavour.

The POA 1992 further stated:

- As in the past, Central Government will provide funds for equipment and teachers' salary for the plan period.
- The State Governments will mobilize resources under JRY and other schemes for construction of school buildings, including Headmaster-cum-office and toilet facilities.
- The state Governments will also provide contingency and replacement funds for equipment.

- Ongoing OB will cover all schools by 1993-94
- Other two sub-schemes will be started in the second half of the Eighth Plan.
 - About 30% of the eligible schools will be provided three rooms and three teachers under the expanded OB Scheme by the end of the Eighth Plan and the remaining schools will be covered by the year AD 2000.
 - Under the expanded OB Scheme, a limited number of Upper Primary schools will be covered during the Eighth Plan. Depending upon the availability of funds, all Upper Primary School will be covered by the year AD 2000.

4.6 Operation Blackboard Scheme in the Eighth Plan

In 1993, the Expenditure Finance Committee and the Cabinet approved the modified scheme guidelines for the Eighth Plan. Besides enhancing financial provision for Teaching-Learning (TLE) from Rs. 7215/- to Rs. 10,000/- per primary school, it was decided to continue central assistance during the Eighth Plan towards salary of teachers appointed during the annual Plan 1990-91 and 1991-92.

In order to operationalise the revised policy of the Government regarding school facilities, the following three sub-schemes were proposed under the Operation Blackboard Scheme during the Eighth Plan.

- (i) Continuation of the on-going OB Scheme during 1993-94.
- (ii) Expanding the scope of OB to provide three teachers and three rooms to primary school whenever enrolment exceeds 100. It was proposed to cover about 30 per cent such schools during the last three years of the Eight Plan.
- (iii) Extending the scope of OB to Upper Primary Schools, it was proposed to cover about 10% of such school during the last two years of the Eighth Plan.

- (iv) It was also decided to enhance coverage under (ii) and (iii) depending on the availability of funds.

While suggesting various measures for universalization of elementary education, the Chapter II of the Eighth Plan states:

Besides expansion of school facilities, there will be need to improve the quality of education by providing existing schools with sufficient facilities. Therefore, the Operation Blackboard Scheme will not only be continued and completed during the Eighth Plan in relation to primary schools but also extended to upper primary schools. The eventual move would be to move towards a situation where every class has a classroom and a teacher.

4.7 Modified Modus Operandi of Implementation

Based on the external evaluation of the scheme and the past experience, it was decided to bring about the following modifications in the modus operandi of implementation.

- (i) Regarding the teaching-learning equipment to be procured under the scheme, broad categories would be defined but the specific items under each category would be left entirely to the State Governments who may decide on the items as per local conditions.
- (ii) As far as possible procurement of equipment should be decentralized and quality control strictly insisted upon.
- (iii) For better utilization of teaching-learning equipment, emphasis would be given to train the maximum possible number of primary teachers. The Central Government was to supplement the efforts of the State Governments in this regard through a new programme of "Special Orientation of Primary School Teachers" (SOPT)
- (iv) It was made mandatory that 50 per cent of the teachers appointed should be women.

The scope of Operation Blackboard (OB) scheme was extended to improve retention, specially of girls, at primary stage. The following components were envisaged in improving facilities at the Upper Primary stage:

- (i) At least one room for each class, and where there is more than one section in a class, for each section.
- (ii) A Head Master-cum-Office room
- (iii) Necessary toilet facilities
- (iv) A contingency grant of Rs. 1000/- per annum
- (v) Library facilities
- (vi) Essential equipment
- (vii) At least one teacher for each class / section

It was decided that the responsibility for items (i) to (iv) would be with the State Government.

- Salary of one additional teacher was to be borne by the Central government during the Plan Period.
- Based on the recommendation of the NCERT, it was proposed to provide Rs. 50,000/- to each school for essential equipment including Rs. 10,000/- for library facilities.
- In order to promote community participation in this venture, it was proposed to give preference in selection of villages where community contributed 20% (Rs. 10,000/-) towards equipment in which Central contribution was to be restricted to Rs. 40,000/- per school. However, in tribal (TDA) areas, 100% assistance was to be provided. While releasing money for equipment, the existing material available with the school was to be taken into account and only the balance funds within the approved ceiling was to be provided.

4.8 Implementation Procedure at the State Level

In 1993, the Education Secretaries of State and UTs were advised to initiate action on the following:

- (viii) Assessment of district-wise requirements of funds for providing buildings to Primary and Upper Primary Schools as per the revised OB norms.
- (ix) Fix a time schedule for preparation of District Plans for school building construction under normal Jawhar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), intensified JRY and Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS).
- (x) Ensure that matching share of 40% is available from other state resources so that 48% can be drawn as Central assistance.
- (xi) Incorporate the requirement of school building in JRY plan at state and district level.

4.9 Mid-term External Evaluation

An external evaluation of the scheme, carried out during 1992-93 at the behest of the MHRD, indicated:

- Lack of training of teachers in using the teaching-learning materials,
- Specification of a large number of uniform facilities to be provided without modification according to local need, and
- Lack of provision for breakage of equipment.

4.10 Latest Progress Report

An overview of progress of the OB, as stated in the reports of the MHRD till 1998-99, is given below:

Coverage:

- The Coverage of OB includes all types of primary school managed by Government, Local Bodies, Panchayat Raj bodies and recognized aided schools.
- The scope of OB was confined to Primary stage (viz. Schools up to class IV or V) depending upon the structure in different states/ UTs
- Upper Primary and Secondary schools, even if they had classes I-IV/V, were not covered under the scheme because funds for such schools were not provided by MHRD for building construction.
- 5.23 lakh Primary schools have been covered as originally envisaged in the scheme.

Teaching-Learning Materials :

- 100% Central assistance was provided for teaching-learning materials at the rate of Rs. 7215 per Primary School.
- In 1993, financial provision for Teaching Learning Equipment was enhanced to Rs. 10,000/-
- Broad categories for teaching-learning materials were defined by the NCERT. However, the specific items under each category were left to the State Governments. They were advised to decide the items as per the local conditions.
- Provision of teaching learning materials have been made as per norms in 5.23 lakh schools covered under OB.

- 47,589 Upper Primary schools have been provided Central assistance for teaching-learning materials in the Eighth Plan.
- Flexibility in the selection of teaching-learning equipment and their decentralized procurement has facilitated timely supply of quality materials in several states.

Teachers:

- 1.74 lakh single teacher schools have been converted into two teacher schools.
- 34,892 posts of third teacher have been created in Primary schools with enrolment exceeding 100 in the Eighth Plan.
- 36,981 additional posts of teachers have been created in Upper Primary Schools in the Eighth Plan.

Training of Personnel:

- The Programme of Mass Orientation of School Teachers (PMOST), implemented during 1986-89, was extended in 1990 to reorient the Primary teachers, specifically to the use of materials supplied under the OB Scheme. Realizing that the number of Primary teachers was large and institutionalization of in-service education was still taking roots, the training of teachers was undertaken under a Centrally Sponsored Scheme called Special Orientation Programme for Primary School Teachers (SOPT) from the year 1993-94 with a view to improving the quality of primary / elementary education as a part of the strategy of achieving the UEE. The SOPT was expected to cover 4.5 lakh primary school teachers every year.

Training Material / Training Package:

- In order to provide In-service training to Primary school teachers, the NCERT has developed in two parts a Self-Instructional Package for SOPT*
- Part I of the Package contains modules aimed at creating awareness among teachers about basic strategies and concerns reflected in the NPE and POA. Part II of the training package includes modules in curricular areas viz., (I) Language, (ii) Mathematics, (iii) Environmental Studies I (Social Studies), (iv) Environmental Studies II (Science), (v) Art Education, (vi) Work Experience, and (vii) Health and Physical Education.
- A Training Manual for Special Orientation Programme for Primary School Teachers has also been developed by the NCERT for use by Course Directors and Resource Persons (Master Trainers, Key Persons, Resource Persons) in their training programme.
- The NCERT has also developed educational television support along with the print material (for training of personnel) to make the SOPT more effective and purposeful.

School Building:

- Construction of additional classrooms and school building has had favourable impact which is reflected in the Sixth All India Education Survey.

Funds / Assistance:

- No funds were provided by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) for construction of school buildings.

- State/UT Government were expected to undertake construction of school buildings under the ongoing Rural Employment Programme from the resources made available by the Finance Commission, or any other source.

4.11 Parliament Questions on Operation Blackboard

Implementation of the OB Scheme generated widespread interest among all major political policies throughout the last one decade, as it is manifested in the Parliament question' during this period. On an analysis of the replies provided by the Minister of Human Resource Development one gets a overview of the inputs provided to the states under the scheme. The status regarding the actual outcome in the field in terms of the availability of the school teacher is single-teacher schools, construction of classroom wherever they were needed and the use of teaching and learning materials in the classroom did not figure in the responses. This is mainly due to the non-availability of authentic information from the field through the Quarterly Reporting System as envisaged by the ministry while launching the scheme.

A collection of parliamentary question's on Operation Blackboard from 1990 on wards is given below:

Date		No.	Response
Jul 27 1992	LS	*183	Proposed to continue to cover all remaining schools and expand during the 8 th Plan. Steps taken: Special training program for teachers. State govts will be persuaded to provide contingency expenses. Flexibility for purchase of OB materials. At least 50% of teachers recruited will be women to encourage girls' enrolment.
Nitish Kumar Saroj Dubey			
Jul 30 1993	RS	725	Main findings of evaluation reports were: - Scheme has helped in improving physical facilities in

Krishan Lal Sharma			<p>primary schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Utilisation of TLM has however not been satisfactory because of lack of training of teachers. - Pace of construction of school buildings has not been very satisfactory. - Majority of categories of persons interviewed appreciated the facilities being provided under OB and indicated that the appropriate and regular use of TLM would result in a clear increase in enrolment and retention. <p>Overall pace of implementation is generally satisfactory. Steps proposed include sufficient flexibility for purchase of equipment, decentralisation of procurement of TLM, strengthening of teacher training component.</p>
May 6 1994	RS	6109	<p>Initial targets – 20% (87-88), 30% (88-89), 50% (89-90)</p> <p>However, due to constraint on resources, phasing had to be extended. From 87-88 to 93-94, the OB scheme was implemented in 6397 (100%) blocks of the country comprising 99.9% of all primary schools.</p> <p>It is proposed to cover the remaining 500 (0.1%) schools in 94-95.</p> <p>NCERT and 4 other external agencies were entrusted with the task of evaluating the 1st phase of OB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - findings same as prev question - in addition, MHRD reported that OB schools were found to be better off than non OB schools
May 6 1994	RS	6115	<p>Categorical denial of the suggestion that the scheme had failed. Evaluation studies and their agencies:</p> <p>Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra – NCERT</p> <p>Orissa, Himachal Pradesh – ORG</p> <p>Uttar Pradesh – GB Pant Social Science Institute Allahabad</p> <p>Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh – NIRD, Hyderabad</p> <p>Rajasthan – Sandhan</p>
Aug 5 1994	RS	1613	<p>NCERT study conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 88.4% of schools had at least 2 teachers - 20.4% of schools had a female teacher - 83.8% of schools had 2 all weather rooms - 9.7% of schools had toilet facilities - almost all the TLM had reached and 93.5% were using all or some of the materials. - 52% of all the teachers appointed under OB were women. <p>ORG reported 96% of 94 Himachal Pradesh and 92% of 226 Orissa schools without toilets.</p> <p>Construction of toilets and drinking water facilities is responsibility of state govts. They have been advised to take advantage of JRY, Employment Assurance schemes.</p>

Aug 5 1994	RS	1652	No state-wise targets are fixed for implementation of OB. Proposed to cover 14,000 (10%) of upper primary schools during the 8 th plan. Expanded OB scheme will follow these criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - only rural schools to be covered under 8th Plan - girls schools to be given priority - SC/ST areas to be given preference
May 2 1995	LS	393	Periodically monitored. 7 evaluations in the last 3 years. Where implemented, OB has had a positive impact on learning levels. Reviewed at Conference of State Education Ministers on April 4, 1995 which resulted in a concrete action plan to improve implementation. Concurrent evaluation by external agencies in 95-96
Aug 4 1995	RS	606	Cumulative expenditure up to March 1995 – 1247 crores. TLM supplied to 100% of primary schools existing when scheme launched. 98% of additional teachers appointed. 55% of additional school rooms constructed. 30% coverage planned under expanded programme during 8 th plan.
Dec 20 1996	RS	*422	Statement (SR Bommai): The main responsibility for provision of amenities and infrastructure facilities and primary schools

Bratin Sengupta M Aram Ramdas Agarwal Ram Gopal Yadav Shrief-ud-din Shariq Bharati Roy Vishnu Kant Shastri O Rajagopal Maula. Habibur Rahman Nomani			rests with state govts and UT administrations. The following CSSs also make special provisions for this purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OBB - Lok Jumbish - BEP In addition, the DPEP is being carried out in 59 districts in 11 states with external assistance. Q by RG Yadav: If only 2 rooms and a veranda have been provided, then how will 5 classes work? And what is the centre doing to fulfil its responsibility towards primary education? Primary education is on the concurrent list and there is an agreement with the states. Central Govt carries out its responsibility by giving food under the mid-day meal scheme. OB will be extended – if there are 3 teachers and 3 rooms, we will provide an additional teacher and a room. Similarly if there are 5 teachers and 5 rooms we will still provide the extra teacher and the room. (??) We will also give Rs. 50,000 for materials (????) There were 5,22,902 schools to be covered under OB scheme and all have been supplied with TLM. The target for additional teachers was 1.53 lakh. Achieved 1.47 lakh The target for school rooms was 2.63 lakh. Achieved 1.74 lakh. One of the serious suggestions endorsed by the minister was that more voluntary organisations should come forth to set up and run schools. Also said that he was all for decentralisation and that the Zila Parishad should get the power.
Jun 8 1998	LS	1830	Evaluation report indicates deficiencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - delay in construction of classrooms - inadequate teacher training - centralised purchase of uniform TLM for all schools. Steps taken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - states given flexibility to select own TLM - decentralisation of purchases - SOPT (Special Orientation of Primary Teachers) training programme undertaken by NCERT

4.12 Status of OB Schools in DPEP Districts

The MIS Unit of Education Consultants India Limited, attached to its Technical Support Group implemented a District Information System for Education (DISE). Its Data Capture Format (DCF) records the response either as 'yes' (Y) or as 'no' (N) when the question is asked, "Is the school covered under Operation Blackboard?". All the

schoolrelated data are available for each OB school- located in DPEP project area through the DISE.

The above Unit recently analyzed district-wise aggregated data and summarized then for phase I expansion and phase II/III districts conforming to the record date of September 30,1999.

However, due to some constraints, the data related to Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Rajasthan could not be included in the analysis.

The following findings are available from the above analysis:

(i) General

In DPEP area, 49% of the schools, 48% of the teacher' and 51% of the enrolment are in the OB schools. While at one end of the spectrum, 85% of the Primary Schools in west Bengal were OB (max.96.7% in Bankura), on the other extreme only 24% of the schools in Bihar (min. 5% in Rohtar) were OB Schools.

(ii) Female teachers

59% of the OB schools did not have any female teacher. Here also, the inter and intra-state variation' were very high. In West Bengal, for example, 70% of the OB schools did not have any female teacher(in Bankura, 97% of the schools without any female teacher were OB schools). In the other extreme, only 2% of the OB schools in Kerala did not have any female teacher.

(iii) Single teacher schools

Overall, 16% of the OB schools were found to be single-teacher school. This was highest in UP, where 27% of the OB schools had only one teacher in place, at the other end of the range, only 5 out of 2747 OB schools in Kerala had one teacher in place.

It is also interesting to note that 44% of the one-teacher schools happen to be OB schools.

(iv) Availability of Blackboards

In many state a large proportion of the OB schools did not have even a single blackboard. In UP, for example, 13% of the OB schools had no blackboard. In district Sonbhadra of the state, out of 629 OB schools, 136 did not have any blackboard. Similarly, in Bihar 13% of the OB schools had no blackboard . In Gaya, 236 OB schools, out of a total of 1119, did not have any blackboard.

4.13 Probe Survey of OB Schools

The Public Report on Basic Education in India (PROBE), prepared by a team of researchers in association with the centre for Development Economics, New Delhi and published by Oxford University Press in October 1998, contain' several observation on the implementation of the OB scheme in the field based on the survey conducted by the team. These include the following:

- OB has achieved some positive results. For instance, the proportion of single-teacher primary schools in the PROBE states has significantly declined. Also, the famine of teaching aids and classroom material has been partially relieved. Aside form teaching aids, some schools are now proud owners of items such as a bucket a rope, a school bell, mats, and so on.
- However, the overall achievement of OB are well below the target. Only one-fourth of all government primary schools in the PROBE villages attain the minimal benchmark of
 - at least two all-weather rooms,
 - at least two teachers, and
 - at least some teaching aids.

- Another major lapse is the failure to realize that if the different components of Operation Black Board are 'interdependent', then supplying one of them only may reduce the impact of the programme or even prove self-defeating. Here are some examples:
 - The school has the toys and teaching kits, but these are kept locked up because there is only one teacher, one broken-down classroom and classes are held in the open (Khurd, Dholpur district Rajasthan).
 - Musical instruments and the science kit are in the teacher's house because the school building cannot be locked (Kanari, Varanasi district, U.P.).
 - The teachers have received OB training but the school has not received the OB teaching aids (Vangaon, Saharsa district, Bihar).
- Sometimes there is a hint of corruption. At several schools, head teachers complained that they were forced to sign for the complete OB kit whether each item was there or not, and whether it was functional or not. Musical instruments in particular were usually received in a broken state. Other schools complain that the original items were non-functional, and could not be replaced or repaired as Operation Black Board is a one-time grant.

According to PROBE, the appointment of extra teachers under OB has, to some extent, substituted for normal teacher appointments rather than supplemented them. Although OB appointments are meant to be additional appointments, several states slowed down on regular teacher appointments after Operation Blackboard began, to keep the overall salary bill under control. Indeed, the overall rate of growth of teacher-appointments has been lower in the last ten years, i.e. 1987-1996 compared to 1978-86 ('Draft Report of the Group of Experts on the Financial Resource Requirements for operationalising the proposed 83rd Constitutional Amendment Bill Making the Right to Free and

Compulsory Education upto 14 years of Age a Fundamental Right,' memo, Department of Education, Government of India, 1998, New Delhi)

Besides receiving wide spread complaints of corruption in the procurement and supply of OB items, the survey team also found the school management structure to be totally indifferent to the prevailing state of affairs:

The management structure, however, shows no responsiveness to these implementation problems. Instead we have a bureaucratic approach, which concentrates on meeting certain quantitative targets in terms of schools covered, teaching aids distributed and so on. If these targets are met, Operation Black Board is assumed to be doing fine.

Indeed the real irony is not that the problems exist but rather that the management structure takes no cognizance of them, and has even decided that this phase of Operation Blackboard is a closed chapter. In its 1996-7 Annual Report, the Department of Education claims (p.33) that items (2) and (3) above have been 'fully provided to all the targeted primary schools'; the 1997-8 report reiterates (p.32) that the physical targets set under the Eighth Plan were achieved with remarkable success'. The next phase is to focus on providing a third room for primary schools with enrolment greater than 100, and on upper primary schools. It is as if the reality on the ground was supposed to match the figures in the document, rather than the other way round.

5. MAJOR FINDINGS AND THEIR POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Overall Assessment of the Effect of OB

There has been considerable increase in the availability of funds to the primary education sub-sector in the states for the construction of additional classrooms, recruitment of additional teachers and supply of some basic teaching and learning equipment to primary schools.

However, different states utilized this additional central assistance, not necessarily strictly following the agreed norms of the scheme, but according to their felt needs, capacity, and individual sense of priorities.

5.2 Construction of Additional Classrooms

- While there has been significant improvement in terms of the aggregated achievement data, they do not reveal the actual coverage of single classrooms, which was the target category of the scheme.
- As it was not specifically provided for in the scheme, there has not been any significant improvement in the design, quality of construction and nature of utilization of the additional classrooms. In some cases, wherever the local school authorities and communities took the initiative they could devise innovative classroom organization for utilizing the additional covered space for multi-grade teaching, creating flexible learning situations and mobilizing additional resources locally.
- By and large, the covered space in small schools is utilized more as a shelter during the rainy season, rather than for actual teaching and learning which generally takes place outside in the open space.

➤ The chronic problem of repair and maintenance of school buildings has remained largely unsolved despite the allocation and release of contingency funds to schools in several states. There are indications that wherever the Village Panchayat and Village Education Committee took interest, things had improved.

➤ On the positive side, the component of construction of additional classrooms with funds from JRY and NREP and through community mobilization has, by its very nature, made the state education department and local primary education establishments, Panchayat Raj institutions, village education committees and school managing committees come closer and work together for a common purpose. The shortfall in the construction targets or slow implementation of this component should, therefore, be seen in that light. With added impetus, this collaborative arrangement could act as a bottom up initiative to strengthen the process of decentralization of primary education administration and be institutionalized to assume the charge of regular maintenance of school buildings, along with other important school management responsibilities.

➤ While the target for the construction of additional classrooms has been achieved to the extent of about 60-70 per cent as a national average by the end of 1999, the percentage of toilets constructed along with such classrooms has not been more than 10. The non-availability of funds might not have been the main consideration here. The requirement of an easy and constant source of water and regular up-keep of the toilets might have been more difficult to fulfil at the local planning and construction stage.

The above mismatch between the process of centralized planning and local execution is reflected in all the three components of OB Scheme. This also highlights the importance of involving the local school community in the process of planning school improvement from the grass-roots and reciprocating such demand-driven bottom-up initiatives with top-down administrative and financial support. Such participatory

planning and management initiatives develop a sense of ownership among the local communities and to a certain extent ensures the sustainability of the gain.

5.3 Additional Teachers for Single-Teacher Schools

- As it has been reported in NCERT's fifth All India Education Survey, 35 per cent of primary schools had one teacher in 1986, which has been taken as the baseline for the Scheme. The current figure in respect of one teacher is 15 per cent as may be calculated by averaging the figures received from the present national survey and the MIS data from Ed.Cil. The very fact that about 43 per cent of the schools have still only one teacher raises questions about the validity of the claim that 100 per cent money for this component of the scheme has been utilized and the same may be treated as a measure of the achievement of the scheme. The Annual Report of MHRD does not actually indicate the achievement of this scheme irrespective of this component. The actual situation seems to be much more complex and unsatisfactory.

This high level of non-achievement of the target in respect of this component may be due to one or all of the following factors:

- First, most states did not appoint the required number of additional teachers and diverted the unutilized money received from the union government to meet the other commitments.
- Second, most major states had, in fact, recruited the required number of teachers, but all these teachers were not actually deployed in the target single-teacher schools. A high percentage of them might have been deployed or redeployed in schools having more than one teacher.
- Third, while most major states might have deployed all the new recruits at the planned target of single teacher schools they might have also set up new primary

schools with one teacher during the period of implementation of the scheme, violating the agreed policy and norms laid down in the scheme. However, this does not seem to be widespread as there has not been any significant number of new teachers by states in addition to the number sanctioned under the OB scheme. The total number of teachers appointed by all states taken together in addition to the number sanctioned in the scheme during the period of implementation is not likely to be more than four thousand.

In most cases, all the three reasons might have created the present unsatisfactory situation.

- The problem of rationalization of the deployment of primary school teachers is a complex and politically charged one. Since most single-teacher schools are located in small or isolated habitations and the present departmental recruitment is done without reference to the vacancy in any specific school in a block or a district, the decision regarding the posting of a particular teacher at a particular school is purely an administrative and often a subjective one. As a result, very often the filling of the posts in these schools through the deployment of new teachers or redeployment of surplus teachers from other schools are individually or collectively resisted by affected teachers. Since the small communities, who happen to be the beneficiaries, also happen to be socially disadvantaged and weak, they take the vacancies in their local schools for granted. In recent years, several states were either stopped by the courts from appointing new teachers or they themselves have imposed a ban on such recruitment. The OB scheme in the present form does not address the above issues.
- The present initiative on the part of several states to divert the additional teacher salary component for the appointment of para teachers, purely on a temporary basis at a much lower salary under schemes like SK, AS or EGS seems to be a very shortsighted soft option. While these initiatives are providing breathing time to the concerned states, they are bound to face the complex problem while trying to restructure the present system of primary education. As Madhya Pradesh has recently

initiated, each state will have to develop a long-term perspective for its effective decentralization of the present structure by bringing all current EFA initiatives under one umbrella at the district level of the Panchayati Raj setup with a strong academic support structure at the block and cluster levels, as presently being attempted under DPEP.

5.4 Teaching Learning Equipment

The limitations of the present organizational structure, management practices and culture come out as major constraints not only in the efficient and effective implementation of the classroom construction and teacher deployment components of OB. This is also the most significant constraint in perpetuating the present ineffective classroom practices, as a result of which, the Teaching and Learning Equipment (TLE) supplied under the scheme could not be made use of in the actual classroom situation. These factors are grossly underestimated while planning and supplying the TLE and organizing related teacher training programmes.

As it is now known from different persons associated with the preparation of the original list of equipment and materials to be supplied to primary schools as a part of the OB scheme, the scope of the list was redefined at various stages, starting from the idea of providing some basic items like children's books for institutionalizing primary school library, musical instruments for promoting community singing and skipping ropes and throw balls for making the games period interesting. The idea of providing charts showing birds, animals, fruits, flowers, transports, body parts, etc. was to create opportunities for teachers to rouse children's interest in the lessons on environment, for which no textbooks are prescribed for grades one and two. However this initial idea subsequently expanded the list of items to include standard science and mathematics kits for systematic teaching and learning of these subjects and a tool box for conducting well-planned work experience activities.

The list of TLE was expanded in the above manner at a time when there was enough evidence that the work experience component in the primary school curriculum did not actually make any headway in the field and the NCERT science kits supplied to a considerable number of well-established primary schools under a UNICEF assistance project were never opened in most of the recipient schools during a decade before launching the OB Scheme. Since this memory was quite fresh in the mind of the NCERT faculty at that time, there are reasons to believe that these components were added to have an outlet for the utilization of NCERT's newly acquired mass production workshop facilities for science kits under a GTZ grant, which remained unutilized in the absence of a captive market. Once the above kits were incorporated in the TLM, which later became TLE, an outlet for such production was provided. Similarly, the need for a separate teacher training programme was articulated. While the bulk of the central assistance was for improving the basic infrastructure of primary school, the inclusion of the kits which took away the bulk of the TLM grant and which was not likely to be used in the absence of a major shake-up of the system, unnecessarily took away the attention of the state educational authorities from completing a limited task efficiently of institutionalizing the use of basic school facilities to a disproportionately large scale procurement exercise having almost no immediate use in most primary schools in view of an unfavorable ground-level reality.

5.5 Ground-Level Reality

One can get glimpses of the ground level reality in rural primary schools in several states in India from the ethnographic studies conducted along with the present overall national evaluation of Operation Blackboard. As it will be seen from these reports, the world of small rural primary schools in India is a sad and dark one. It is only through a process of emersion in the neighbouring rural society, the researchers could learn the art of reconstructing this reality in their reports. Some of the most important common observations that one could cull out of the three volumes of these reports are:

- In many cases, it is the villagers who took the initiative of setting up a primary school in their village and developed it bit by bit with a sense of community ownership. But once the school was taken over by the government, the teachers started distancing from the original founders and the community started losing interest in the school. On seeing the indifference of government functionaries towards the dilapidated condition of schools, the villagers learned to feel helpless even when they found that the school teachers were not regularly attending the school or children were not learning anything worthwhile.
- In many states, there is no school timetable worth its name or any well organized teaching and learning plan even when teachers are present in the school. Corporal punishment is still widespread. The children learn to ritualistically assemble, do some routine drill of reading and writing for less than half the time for which the school is supposed to be actively functioning.
- If there is more than one teacher in the school, they divide the days in a month or parts of a day in turn for attending the school on some plea or the other. Very rarely all the teachers remain throughout a working day.
- For every problem in the school, like frequent absence of teachers, irregular attendance of children, inability of most children to read and write at a minimum expected level, the head master or the assistant teacher present has a readily available answer: "It is the children and their parents who are responsible for all the malady one witnesses in the school."
- Children hardly receive books in the beginning, or even in the middle of the academic year. Only a very limited number of them have all the textbooks. Children hardly show any self-confidence and ability to independently read their grade-level textbooks. Almost none of them can write anything on their own.

- Most teachers sincerely believe that children belonging to backward communities are incapable of learning the way the children from the upper castes or educated families. Most parents accept such observation as a valid one.
- Most parents believe that if they want their children to do better in the school, the children should be coached by a tutor. Teachers also reinforce this belief and many parents have to spend their hard-earned money for private coaching of their children, even in rural areas.
- Repeated failure and a sense of helplessness is one of the root causes of children dropping out of the school, even after crossing the hurdle of acquiring the basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Most classroom exercises are repetitive and monotonous and they do not provide any room for any individual initiative or meaningful learning. However, once any new teacher or a visitor tries to enthuse children to do things in different ways, the classroom environment changes qualitatively and the very children who did not have the courage to ask any question to the teacher, become very active and vocal.

The present national evaluation study and several surveys in the past indicated that no investigator could get evidence of any interesting and meaningful use of the TLE items during their visit to the sample schools, which received such item or equipment under OB. However, in some cases where an enthusiastic teacher displayed or demonstrated a chart, a map or any other piece of equipment to the children the environment in the classroom changed. But such experiences were very few and short-lived. They did not become a part of the on-going classroom culture of the school. It was also observed that such enthusiastic teachers could also create a joyful learning environment with locally improvised alphabet or picture cards, games and display boards. It is the internal motivation of the teacher and the overall school movement that make him or her use or improvise teaching and learning aids in the classroom. The percentage of such teachers

and schools is very small. Such personal qualities of individual teachers could hardly be replicated through sporadic and routine-type in-service training.

- There has been very little evidence of appropriate use of contingency funds provided to individual schools and teachers. In the absence of any transparency in the use of the materials supplied and contingency money provided to schools and accountability of teachers to any local management body, the schools seem to be getting away with any casual explanation or statement of account they provide to higher authorities.

From an overall assessment of the current situation regarding the non-use of the teaching-learning materials supplied to schools under OB, one can say without much hesitation that such investment has been, by and large, unproductive. However, wherever some use of such material has been made of, the same could have been done and sustained only with individual teacher and local community efforts. Hence, there is urgent need to facilitate the development of such initiative and to support such local efforts through an innovative management and technical support system.

5.6 Some General Observations

The task of improving small rural primary schools is known to be a formidable one worldwide. Here, it is not just the question of improving the infrastructure, logistics of supply of teaching and learning materials and organizing training of in-service teachers. It is a question of embedding such schools with the on-going development efforts of the small communities surrounding such schools. Till now the task of creating educational opportunities in small habitations and small communities has been seen more as a matter of mechanically extending the given impersonal monolithic system of education to such areas without appreciating the need for developing local initiative for adapting such extended facilities through a process of social mobilization and participatory planning. Such a community -focused approach calls for a strategy of developing the capacity of these communities to take an active part in managing the schools setup with their

participation, as no teacher or supervisor responsible for such schools from a distant town would be easily prepared to share the hard life style of these communities and actively participate in building up such schools with a sense of belonging.

Since the OB scheme was primarily designed to improve the infrastructure and human resource of the small primary schools, mostly located in small and isolated habitations, enough opportunities would have been incorporated in the scheme to involve the local communities in the planning and implementation of the scheme and also for developing their capacity to perform such role. Such a strategy would have required a different kind of phasing of the implementation of the scheme in contrast to the mechanical scaling up of the coverage, as it was planned and executed.

5.7 Statewise Diversities and Disparities

However, despite the above limitations in the formulation and execution of the scheme, what has come out to be a redeeming feature in the implementation of the scheme in different states is a very distinct indication of the positive effect of decentralization of the management of primary education in some states.

The states like Maharastra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu which over the years have established an effective local system of governance through the PR institutions, have done much better in using the additional resources provided under the scheme, not always in quantitative but qualitative terms. These states could generate local capacity in the management of the scheme and additional resources through mobilization of local communities.

Karnataka and West Bengal and lately Andhra Pradesh have also been trying to effectively exploit the local government structures in improving the management of the scheme. This has been very much visible in the construction of additional classrooms.

Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, while making much departure from the norms of the scheme are making use of the resources through innovative approaches, like Shiksha Karmi, Lok Jumbish, Alternative Schooling and Education Guarantee Scheme. These states have demonstrated alternative ways of mobilizing local communities for providing basic educational opportunities in smaller habitations and isolated communities by developing a community-based cadre of para teachers, who proved to be more effective in the case of such small learning centres. The expansion of educational opportunities in these two states in terms of enrolment has been about 5.2 percent/year and 3.8percent/year, respectively compared to the annual national growth rate of 2 percent only.

As Himachal Pradesh has recently been making serious efforts to delegate more power to its lower levels of educational administrator with a view to making them more responsive to the needs of the state's population spread over a hilly terrain in the form small habitations, it could make better use of the additional classrooms and teachers following a flexible and decentralized mode of implementing the scheme. The drop out rate of students from grade I to grade IV has come down to nearly 20 per cent.

Assam and the whole of the North-Eastern region, which chronically suffered from lack of adequate resources for qualitative expansion of primary education, each one of these states evolved their own ways of utilizing the resources provided under the scheme. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Assam registered an annual growth rate of enrolment of 6 percent, 5 percent and 4 percent, respectively.

Goa, Punjab and Haryana happened to have a comparatively better resource base for primary education. The effect of OB, in the states have, therefore, been marginal.

Gujarat and Orissa have still to make their presence felt through some state-level initiatives to strengthen primary education infrastructure and its management. The enrolment growth rates in these states has been around 1.6 percent, much below the national level.

The performance of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in the management of primary education, in general and implementation OB Scheme has remained much below the expected level. Despite the significant contribution made by these states in pioneering the implementation of the Bihar Primary Education Project and the first phase of the Uttar Pradesh DPEP in the late eighties, these two states could be singled out for very low achievement in the reduction of single-teacher OB schools. The enrolment growth rates in these two states have remained, more or less, nearer to the national average rate.

While the implementation of OB in Jammu and Kashmir as a whole has been much better compared to most Northern states in the first phase of the scheme, the status of school education in the Ladakh region took a spectacularly new turn towards qualitative improvement in the last decade. This has been feasible due to the emergence of a non-governmental initiative in the form of 'Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL)' and its partnership with the local government initiatives in this region. The tripartite co-operation between SECMOL, local government and the village communities in reforming the system of education in Ladakh has now acquired the form of a social movement, popularly known as OPERATION NEW HOPE (ONH). In 1994, 34 government schools were adopted and transformed under ONH. The teachers of these schools were trained by a committed technical team, which oversaw the adaptation of new practices in the classroom. The Village Education Committees assumed the responsibility of monitoring the functioning of each school. In October 2000, all government schools in Ladakh have been brought within the fold of ONH.

It is high time that other states and NGOs share the rich experience of Ladakh's Operation New Hope.

5.8 Conclusions

- I. The component of construction of additional classrooms in Operation Blackboard for the implementation of which the state government rather than the central

government had to play a proactive and self-driving role - has had the most significant effect in the field. This is despite a shortfall of 30-40 per cent in the construction of classrooms and a shortfall of about 80-90 per cent in the construction of toilets. It is this component which has been pushing the school authorities to come closer to local communities. If the local communities and their representatives in the Village Education Committees and School Managing Committees are empowered in real terms to raise and operate school maintenance funds, such initiative may restore a sense of ownership among these stakeholders of education. Such an initiative may prove to be the beginning of a bottom up mechanism for decentralization of structure and management of elementary education. Once such community participation is assured, disbursement of money and other resources from the top for qualitative expansion and up-gradation of primary education in the rural areas will become more effective.

II. The additional teacher salary component came as a relief to those states which found it difficult to raise the level of non-plan allocation under this head. On the other hand, this provision might have been used to substitute the allocation of funds for additional teacher salary from state's own resources in several other states. If this trend continues, the state may become more and more dependent on the central government for the planning and management of primary education in the state sector. A more appropriate approach to provide central financial assistance to the states would be to develop a participatory budgeting mechanism jointly with the state education and Panchayati Raj authorities with greater stress on democratic decentralization, in pursuance of the spirit of the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitutions with the provision for directly transferring earmarked funds to the PR Institutions.

III. The expenditure on the supply of Teaching-Learning Equipment, which has largely been anfractuous, should not be seen in isolation from the need for initiating an overall concerted effort to improve the quality of elementary

education. Almost all researchers investigating the issue of school effectiveness all over the world attach great importance to the crucial and catalytic role that local technical support service groups play in bringing about improvement in classroom practices, changes in the attitude of teachers and development of school and community-based management leadership. There is an urgent need to emulate these reforms in the specific context of each state. The positive experiences gained from the Shiksha Karmi Scheme, Lok Jumbish Parishad and some effective DPEP districts and SECMOL of Ladakh and the more recent experiences of the Madhya Pradesh primary education mission be synthesized to develop more effective educational structures at the district, sub-district and cluster levels in close collaboration with the Panchayati Raj institutions. It is only when such support empowered structures are in place, increasing central assistance to the states for universalisation of elementary education may produce the desired result. In fact, the union government may play a very significant role in assisting the states in operationalising such democratic decentralization through an innovative scheme for social mobilization with assured technical support services for capacity development at all levels.

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ANNEXES

Annexure - A

Initial meeting to find out more about Operation Blackboard (OB) from the implementers of the scheme.

Date & Time: October 7, 1999, 1030 Hours

Venue: Room 326, NIEPA, New Delhi 110016

Participants: Prof. AK Jalaluddin (AKJ)

Prof. Daljit Gupta (DG)

Studies so far

The first topic of discussion was the nature of studies carried out so far in order to evaluate the impact of OB. DG mentioned that there had been exercises (although on a smaller scale) conducted in the past:

1. In 1991, a report in the form of an assurance to Parliament, based on a study in three states – Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The study was short term (6 weeks) and covered only the OB materials made available to the schools – what they were and whether they had reached the schools. Since the report was only for the ministry, there were very few copies of it. However DG said she would try and make a copy available to AKJ.
2. In 1994 another report by NCERT was drafted, which was based on the OB evaluation studies assigned by the ministry to agencies such as ORG etc. By and large these were also material status studies and did not contain any info on the implementation in general or its impact. It did find that while the material had reached, it was lying unused because teachers a) said they didn't know how to use it and b) were afraid of damaging it.
3. In 1994, an impact study was conducted by NCERT in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu which looked at a) status of the material b) training of the teachers c) extent of utilization d) effect on learning (with the help of some basic achievement tests). In TN, even in schools where orientation on using the materials was given, the materials

were mostly unused. The reason given was that the teachers who had been trained had been transferred, and the other teachers never felt that the materials were of any use. However, the team which visited Maharashtra found that the materials were in use, and they could clearly see the change in attitude of the teachers and learners (even though the OB scheme was probably not entirely responsible for this).

Apart from these there is no other official information about OB. No info was gathered about the success or failure of OB even from MCD or Haryana schools which were easily accessible to NCERT personnel. DG had some info based on observations as a result of her personal interest on tours across the country.

Initial Stages of Scheme, Implementation and Responsibilities

Initially, when the project was conceived by the Ministry, the idea was only to provide the buildings, and some basic resources (teachers and physical materials). There was no discussion about the materials, their quality and possible impact on learning. NCERT's initial role in OB was to identify the norms for the materials. The MHRD was supposed to look after the implementation. However, NCERT was represented at all state level planning meetings by either DG or PN Dave.

The training of teachers on using these materials came about later only after reports started coming in that no one knew what to do with them. NCERT's responsibility here was to develop material on spreading awareness about the scheme, and to demonstrate sample activities that made use of OB resources. To this end, it launched a massive orientation program, and sent 30,000+ copies of these documents to the states in English and an even larger number in Hindi.

The Pre School and Elementary Education Dept (PSEE) of NCERT had the initial responsibility (for 1 year) of designing the training material, printing and publishing these, identifying and orienting resource persons who would disseminate this at the state level. The Dept of Teacher Education (TEd) did the subsequent follow ups. In

general, for most other programs PSEE only provides occasional technical inputs while TED does the actual training of teachers.

At the state level, OB was the SCERT's responsibility. The Centre made some items on the list mandatory for the states (such as provision of textbooks) and some were optional (such as musical instruments – which were to be obtained locally depending on what was prevalent).

Gradually Science and Mathematics kits were also incorporated into the OB materials package.

At no stage was any discussion or thinking carried out on how the scheme

- came about in the first place
- was to be shared with the state and grass root level agencies
- was to be implemented to make sure its impact was maximised

All discussions at the state level meetings were about the OB funds, how they were to be allotted, whether they had been used etc.

The responsibility for procuring OB materials was given to education secretaries, committees, special officers etc – each state followed its own system.

Implementation Issues and Observations

There were no research studies or guidelines followed on classroom practices when the Norms were being decided. A separate seminar on that theme was held however, and it formed the guiding philosophy behind the drafting of the norms.

Although everyone concerned was aware that in the past, schemes which tried to introduce materials or programs from the Centre on to a large populace, faced formidable difficulties, The OB scheme was conceived in precisely the same manner. Some of the possible reasons for this lack of decentralisation are that a) some states

did not have the facilities for production of the materials and b) even where it was possible to get good locally produced kits etc, they were not recommended for fear of allegations about kickbacks and bribes.

Kits for Mathematics and Science had been developed by NCERT prior to OB. However, these were not widely used because mass producing them was impractical. Some of the older kits were also found not as useful in the field. So fresh kits were designed which would make use of the basic materials made available as part of OB.

DG was of the opinion that the biggest problem with the OB was the lack of training on the use of the materials. This was in a large part the fault of the trainers themselves. Often they would train resource persons without even using the actual materials since those were not available at that time and the printed guides too reached after these orientation sessions got over. AKJ raised the point that using these very basic materials is something that the teachers should have learnt during their pre-service training. DG countered that the BEd training itself was so hopeless that such a thing was not possible.

One of the common complaints by the teachers was that the OB materials would get damaged with use and so they never used them. The scheme had accounted for this by allotting Rs 500 per year (to be paid by the states) as a contingency amount. However, the states frequently defaulted on this payment. It is doubtful whether the schools used the contingency money for replenishing the material, supplied even when it was available.

The OB norms initially also specified that some standard musical instruments be made available to all schools. However, some states procured useless toy instruments while others were unable to use what they had because finding teachers for these was difficult and expensive.

The Physical Ed experts on the Norms committee decided the specific sizes of the equipment but there were no additional recommendations about exactly how they were to be used (i.e. the kind of games, the modified playing areas etc)

Current Programs

Ongoing programs (DPEP/SCERT) to improve school education are mainly looking at curriculum and textbook development. Even in these, when it comes to activities and demonstrations, the teachers are told to refer to the OB materials and use them where possible.

Next Steps

AKJ suggested holding a 1 day workshop with all the people who were involved at the state level when OB was initially launched. This would be done to find out more about how the scheme was implemented at that level.

Recommended Reading

The general formulations incorporated in the NPE have been translated into a detailed strategy of implementation, which assigns specific responsibilities and financial outlay to various departments. Problems of access, quality, quantity, utility, etc., which have now assumed such massive proportions, demand the most urgent urgency. [1.3 NPE-1986]

Provision will be made of essential facilities for the operation of blackboards. Operation Blackboard will be enlarged to provide more facilities. Blackboards are usable in all weather, and blackboards will be provided in all schools.

Workshop to Understand Perspectives on Operation Blackboard
National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New
Delhi 110016

October 16, 1999

Agenda

1. Introduction by Prof AK Jalaluddin
2. Participants' perceptions of the OB Scheme, its objectives and its usefulness
3. Personal observations about the OB scheme
4. Discussion of propositions about OB
5. Proposal for methodology to be adopted for thematic study on OB, time frame, sampling etc.

Background Reading

... the general formulations incorporated in the 1968 policy did not, however, get translated into a detailed strategy of implementation accompanied by the assignment of specific responsibilities and financial and organizational support. As a result, problems of access, quality, quantity, utility and financial outlay, accumulated over the years, have now assumed such massive proportions that they must be tackled with the utmost urgency. [1.8 NPE-1986]

Provision will be made of essential facilities in primary schools, the scope of Operation Blackboard will be enlarged to provide three reasonably large rooms that are usable in all weather, and blackboards, maps, charts, toys and other necessary

learning aids and a school library. At least three teachers should work in every school, the number increasing, as early as possible, to one teacher per class. At least 50 percent of teachers recruited in future should be women. The Operation Blackboard will be extended to upper primary stage also. Construction of school buildings will be a priority charge on JRY funds. [5.7 NPE-1986]

Work Experience, viewed as purposive and meaningful manual work, organized as an integral part of the learning process and resulting in either goods or services useful to the community, is considered as an essential component at all stages of education, to be provided through well structured and graded programs. [8.14 NPE-1986]

... the NPE 1986 recognized that unattractive school environment, unsatisfactory condition of buildings and insufficiency of instructional material function as demotivating factors for children and their parents. The policy, therefore called for a drive for a substantial improvement of primary schools and provision for support services. To this end the scheme of Operation Blackboard was conceived. The launching of this scheme has greater significance in that it was a manifestation of the union's Intent to shoulder its share of responsibilities in this vital area of national life... [7.2.1 NPE-1986 POA-1992]

The scheme of Operation Blackboard was launched in 1987, in pursuance of NPE-POA, to provide minimum essential facilities to all primary schools in the country.

External evaluation of the scheme has indicated that lack of training of teachers in using the teaching material, specification of a large number of uniform facilities to be provided without modification according to local needs and lack of provision for breakage of equipment have been some of the drawbacks of implementation of the scheme.

In order to operationalise the Revised Policy Formulations, the modified OB will contain the following three sub-schemes:

- i. continuation of ongoing OB to cover all the remaining primary schools especially those in SC/ST areas

- ii. expanding the scope of OB to provide three teachers and three rooms to primary schools wherever enrolment warrants them
- iii. Expanding OB to upper primary schools to provide (a) at least one room for each class/section (b) a Headmaster-cum-Office room, (c) separate toilet facilities for girls and boys (d) essential teaching learning equipment including a library (e) at least one teacher for each class/section (f) a contingency grant for replenishment of items, consumables and minor repairs etc.
- iv. The following measures will be taken to improve the quality of implementation of OB
 - v. Teachers will be trained in using the OB teaching materials under a specially designed teacher training program
 - vi. State Governments will make provision for breakage and replacement of equipment
 - vii. Enough flexibility will be provided for purchase of teaching learning materials relevant to the curriculum and the local needs.
 - viii. At least 50% of the teachers appointed will be women. This will have a positive impact on girls' enrolment and retention.
 - ix. Wherever micro-planning projects are taken up OB will form an integral part of micro-planning
 - x. As far as possible low cost and locally available designs relevant to the local conditions will be adopted for school buildings. [7.5.17 – 7.5.22 NPE-1986 POA-1992]

Special Orientation for school teachers ... Under this program, as under the training programs conducted by the DIETs, the emphasis will be on training the teachers in the use of Operation Blackboard materials and orienting them towards the MLL strategy with a focus on the teaching of Language, Mathematics and environmental Studies. [22.2.8 NPE-1986 POA-1992]

Many primary and middle schools do not have even the basic facilities. For instance the Fourth All India Educational Survey (1978) indicates that about 9 percent primary

schools were without any building. Large numbers of such schools were in Punjab (36.2%), Bihar (18.4%), Uttar Pradesh (15.0%) and Orissa (12.5%). Needless to say that in the absence of school building, many other amenities would also not be available in these schools. For example, at All-India level, only 60.3% of primary schools had blackboards. Only 29.5% of schools had any kind of library facilities and 46.6% had playgrounds. However, the distribution of these services across the states varies. For example, only 21.5% of the primary schools in Assam had blackboards, only 6% of primary schools in West Bengal had library facilities and only 16% of Bihar primary schools had playgrounds. In some states even such basic amenities as drinking water were yet to be provided. For example, only 21% of rural primary schools in Madhya Pradesh had drinking water facilities. These deficiencies were found even in high/higher secondary schools. For example, only 92% of West Bengal's higher secondary schools had drinking water facilities. Generally these deficiencies are accentuated in rural schools; as many as 89% of primary schools, 70% of middle, 27% of secondary and 11% of higher secondary schools in rural areas did not have urinal/lavatory facilities. [2.4] *Challenge of Education*

... Where schools exist, 40% have no pucca buildings, 39.72% have no blackboards, and 59.5% have no drinking water. 35% schools have a single teacher to teach 3 or 4 different classes. It is also clear that these teachers cannot possibly look after the diverse interests and variety of educational needs of the pupils. In fact there are surveys which indicate that many schools remain without any teacher for varying periods of time and some teachers are not above sub-contracting teaching work to others who are not qualified for this work either by training or experience. One of the priorities of educational planning has to be the transformation of this bleak picture. It has to be ensured that the rural schools will increasingly match the urban schools in the matter of proper buildings, equipment, sports, and hobby centers and an adequate number of trained teachers. [3.7] *Challenge of Education*

... More than 90% of the expenditure (in some states even more than 98%) is spent on teachers salaries and administration. Practically nothing is available to buy a

blackboard and chalks, let alone charts, other inexpensive teaching aids, or even pitchers for drinking water. There is no point in continuing with the unsubstantiated argument that it is possible to save the situation with non-monetary inputs. If such an alternative approach is considered practical or viable, those who put it forward must spell it out and convince the country and the educationists that what is advocated is really possible. The provision of minimum outlays required for achieving the constitutional goals in respect of elementary education should be considered a national responsibility. The allocation of the share between the Center and the States should not be allowed to cloud the issue. [3.10 *Challenge of Education*]

Taking the example of elementary education, one notices that nearly all of the expenditure incurred is on salaries and administration, leaving very little for socially useful work programs, excursions, games and hobbies, science equipment and kits or even simple posters and charts. In these circumstances, even an inspired teacher, with the best of training would have no choice but to fall back on rote learning of texts in all the existing institutions. [3.71 *Challenge of Education*]

A phased drive should be undertaken to provide the essential facilities necessary for effective transaction of the curriculum in all schools. Government, local bodies, voluntary agencies, and individuals in the community will have to be involved in this task. There exists considerable disparity in the facilities available in the rural and urban schools. There is an urgent need to provide adequate physical facilities to the rural schools to bring them to the level of urban schools. [4.5.2 *National Curriculum*]

Implementation of new strategies for the improvement of the quality of Education should be made through well-designed, time bound projects... One of the major advantages of adopting a project model will be its openness to public scrutiny and accountability. Being time bound and task oriented in nature the project model will have a compulsion to attract the best talent available for completion of the tasks... [4.5.5 *National Curriculum*]

Details of Abbreviated Document Names:

NPE-1986: National Policy on Education - 1986 (with modifications undertaken in 1992). MHRD, Dept of Education, 1992

Challenge of Education: a policy perspective. Ministry of Education, GOI, 1985

National Curriculum: Elementary and Secondary Education – a framework. NCERT, 1988

NPE-1986 POA 1992: Plan of Action 1992, MHRD, Dept of Education, 1992

OB Workshop 16 October, 1999

Participants:

AK Jalaluddin (formerly NCERT)

AK Sharma (formerly NCERT)

Kuldip Kumar (formerly NCERT)

DA Roy (DIET Moti Bagh)

Daljit Gupta (PSEE, NCERT)

Phalachandra (IGNOU)

KM Gupta (Teacher Education, NCERT)

Smita (EdCIL)

Dayaram (EdCIL)

Subir Shukla (Freelance Consultant)

Madhumita Dayaram (EdCIL)

Hemant K. Panda (NIEPA)

Sujai Kumar (Project Assistant)

The session began with AKJ providing a brief introduction to the purpose of the day long workshop. The starting point was the recounting of personal experiences and views on the OB scheme. The participants were asked to share what they felt its objective was and how far it had been able to meet them.

Dayaram's experiences in Rajasthan outlined the following:

Many single teacher schools are present till this day

The kits (eg: mathematics and science) and other learning materials are usually kept locked up in a separate cupboard.

Either there are no books other than the textbooks, or if there are, they are kept locked up as well

The scheme transfers liability of most of the expenses to the state govt after 5 years and this may be one of the biggest reasons for OB's dismal performance.

AKJ then asked the participants to go through a compilation of quotes picked up from various documents written before and after the OB scheme was formulated, which gave a rough idea of the kind of thinking that was going on. He also added that the quotes should have been in chronological order to present a clearer picture. He raised the question about what according to the participants was the primary focus of OB – Access, Equity or Quality?

AK Sharma responded in his capacity as the former Director, NCERT who had been intimately linked with the implementation of the scheme, that in his view OB was essentially about access – providing access to everyone in the country to some basic facilities, in order to bring about some equity in the status of rural and urban schools, and the schools for the privileged and the deprived. Quality of primary education never surfaced as a priority or focus.

He raised a very basic question on what one meant by a school anyway – what is the combination of physical features or the resources (teaching or otherwise) that constitutes the basic idea of a primary school. He felt that OB was formulated without adequate supporting research.

AK Sharma also made the observation that even in places where all the facilities are there, basic pedagogy is flawed.

AKJ agreed with AK Sharma that OB was primarily an initiative for reducing disparity amongst the rural and urban schools, and should be seen as suggesting the norms (rather than anything as strict as a national standard) for furthering this aim.

KM Gupta felt that the scheme lacked any real depth because it concentrated only on supply. Its visualization was diluted in the cascading model that it adopted and in most cases, the basic training for the materials was never provided.

AKJ then tried to raise other issues since the workshop participants seemed to be concentrating only on their own experiences which only confirmed the lack of impact of the scheme – a fact that all participants were already familiar with. These were:

What was the political reasoning behind the conception of such a scheme?

What was the role of the finance commission in OB?

Was the states' level of willingness to take on the liabilities after 5 years considered?

The scheme should be analyzed in terms of proportion of resource allotment (highest teacher, then buildings, then learning materials) and all discussions shouldn't boil down to the issue of learning materials. Perhaps the reason for this proportional break up indicates the priority in the minds of the govt.

Was enrolment / retention really affected?

Are the essentials (basic facilities that OB claimed necessary for EVERY Primary School) that were listed really essential?

At this point, Smita asked what the status of the scheme was at the present date. Kuldeep Kumar gave a rough picture of the scheme's status, clarified the Ministry's stand and how it claimed 100% implementation and therefore had stopped sanctioning money for it, whereas the national evaluation survey shows otherwise.

With reference to SOPT (Special Orientation of Primary Teachers) AK Sharma informed the group that the training was now officially over. He also added that Maharashtra, Gujarat and MP had asked for flexibility in SOPT implementation.

DG and KK both contributed some more info about the dismal status of OB.

AKJ again raised new questions so that everyone could get down to some fresh thinking rather than continue emphasizing the drawbacks and the failures of the scheme:

Since OB was not the first centrally sponsored scheme to have problems, did no one realize or think of this at the planning stage?

While OB supposedly emphasizes micro-planning in actual scheme, it works on a heavily centralized structure – why is this dichotomy not noticed and acted upon

While asking for decentralization, OB failed to suggest the type of management required.

In thinking of all these issues, it is also important to understand the role of intellectuals, academics, and professional educational research and planning organizations. Technical institutes are also rarely able to perform the role that they should due to the abuse of genuine academic excellence and autonomy. Unfortunately, the system lacks institutional memory, as a result of which there is very little inclination to learn from past experiences.

Subir Shukla felt that small schemes and even efforts at the policy level which were isolated were not the need of the hour. He believed a total system change was needed in all sectors at all levels, and this was not happening. The problem according to him, lay at the management level – there was never any management or planning for change (how people mired in the present system could be made to break away and adopt new practices). No effort is ever made to really shed authority. Besides education is a social activity and cannot be seen in isolation from political formulation and community involvement. Centrally sponsored schemes, according to him, lack that basic spark at the village level which local initiatives have. OB was a lesson (albeit a costly one) and we should learn from it.

Smita made the point that most schemes are too fragmented and superficial. Examples include OB (concentrated only on delivery and not on quality or utilization) and DIET (an elaborately conceived scheme but with no emphasis on capacity building).

In centrally sponsored schemes, the national resource centres should act as clearing houses of positive experiences and methods rather than as 'package pushers'.

According to Phalachandra, there are serious flaws in such schemes when it comes to time management, an example of which is the way training was carried out without the materials because the materials were not ready in the specified three month period. District level planning too never happens because there is really no decentralization. Although it is talked about, the districts are never enabled to make their own decisions. There are also several loopholes in the fund flows which are exploited at all levels.

About the training programs, DG felt that the classroom processes were never given any importance, and that they generally lacked focus. None of the programs took into consideration the diversity of the learners – and a 'one-size-fits-all' approach was used. Phalachandra also added that much was lost in the cascading of the training. But Roy said that it wasn't the training which was a problem, it was the fact that the trainees didn't use it once they got back to their regular environments.

AKJ summed up all these experiences by suggesting that behaviour change cannot be brought about with external regulations, mechanisms or even monetary resources. The community has to be made to participate and have a stake in what is going on. The methodology of change is outdated.

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Minutes of OB Meeting on 22-23 December, 1999

Prof. SN Prasad – Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry

Prof. JN Joshi – Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab

Shri Parthiban – West Bengal, Bihar, Assam

Dr HK Senapati – Tripura, Mizoram, Sikkim, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Dr Rath – Rajasthan

Prof. AK Jalaluddin

Prof. Shyam Menon

Dayaram

Prof. R Govinda

Prof. Kuldeep Kumar

Shri Hemant Panda

Shri Sujai Kumar

KK introduced the participants and briefed everyone present about the multiple purposes that the meeting was to serve –

- to gain first hand knowledge of the status of the OB survey by interacting directly with the state co-ordinators of the OB survey in order to prepare an interim report of the project for the MHRD
- to allow AKJ and SM, who are conducting thematic studies as part of the same project, to get an idea of the realities that the OB survey has unearthed.

AKJ then presented the issues that he wished to discuss with the survey co-ordinators:

- basic issues about OB – why they thought the scheme had been formulated in the first place, its scope and usefulness

- how the main point is normally assumed to be the Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) without seeing that that was the least resource intensive component.
- which experiences from the survey indicate the kind of steps that can be taken in order to make schools more effective.
- how policy initiatives should take into account the way that a policy is to be implemented and not just provide the idea that “something” should happen.
- how quality improvements can be made if the money is made available... what are the kind of policy initiatives that should be made by the govt.

RG raised the issue that the main factor is really the teacher, and not the TLM. What a teacher does with the TLM is dependent on the teacher so the focal point for quality improvement must be the teacher. But this lack of teacher motivation or initiative should be taken into account while designing a policy or a scheme, according to AKJ. For example, while saying that more women should be recruited as teachers, simultaneous measures to relax recruitment norms and give preference to local teachers or make local accommodation available must be prescribed.

The discussion then went on to how both politicians and bureaucrats are responsible for promoting Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), and how the technocrats must also take the blame for promoting such efforts.

The participants then made presentations state-wise on what analysis of the OB survey data had revealed.

JN Joshi – Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana

Before beginning his presentation, JNJ referred to two studies that he had conducted on the efficacies of training programmes and their impact on learning outcomes. The findings there had shown that while the training progress had been ok, the learning outcomes, if anything, were worse. Teachers themselves scored very low on the same test used to assess the students' learning level. This extremely deplorable quality of

teachers could be a possible reason for any scheme failing to have an impact on the learning outcomes of children.

Referring to the OB Survey, he pointed out how difficult it was to get data about OB implementation from the Govt. This showed the apathy of the managers of education in our country.

- The District level officers say that the SCERT looked after the implementation of OB.
- Someone comes from the blocks to pick up the TLM kits as there was no arrangement for the supply (transport) of the TLM to the blocks/schools.
- The supply of materials was not timely. Once it reached the district hq, it was dumped there until someone came to pick it up.

Classrooms have been constructed but no toilets.

A majority of the teachers didn't use the OB materials

- no directions on how to use them
- no one had told them the purpose or the idea behind the scheme
- The quality of the TLM was bad in most cases. Teachers and others were afraid that they might break so they didn't want to use it.
- Head teachers reluctant to give materials to other teachers for fear of misplaced articles at the time of audit (every year).

AKJ made the point that the TLM may have been late one year, but it was at least early for the next year, and so JNJ agreed that the late supply of the materials could not have been the reason for their not being used appropriately.

- Very few teachers said they had been trained for OB. Many didn't know what OB was.
- Training not planned properly – no one knew who was to attend.

- Some felt that a week was not enough.
- Not all the materials were shown.

JNJ confirmed that there was some improvement in the social behaviour and classroom environment. He also added that amongst HP, Punjab and Haryana, HP was the best of the lot (even in the remote areas) and Haryana was the worst. Kits are being used in some places. But he could not say that learning had improved.

- Practically no VECs or PTAs were functional.
- Majority of the communities interviewed however said
- students are more serious now (probably because everyone has realised that it is important to get good marks in school)
- attendance has improved (though not necessarily because of OB)

In Himachal Pradesh, teachers were more serious (possibly because of a more dynamic DEO)

Haryana teachers tended to go back to their old ways.

AKJ proposed that we look at TLMs in a different light. They were not really meant to have an impact on performance directly. TLM meant to break the monotony and drudgery of a typical classroom. They may not have an effect on the mean score directly, but the change in environment due to some basic exposure is as important. In that sense they would have had an effect on learning. Is it the culture of the area that makes the difference in usage of OB or is it the training?

Parthiban – Bihar, West Bengal, Assam

Bihar

BEP schools in Bihar were definitely using much more of OB materials because other schemes had established the link between them and classroom practices much better.

When the Bihar govt had initially conducted the survey for determining which schools needed OB materials, they had actually surveyed only 52% of the schools and then scaled up the figures for the whole state.

Implementation by phase (or district?):

1st phase (dist?) – 120 blocks

2nd phase – 118 blocks

3rd phase – 90 blocks

4th phase – 261 blocks

Each block was supposed to submit a proposal to the State level Empowered Committee (consisting of Education secretary, Director of Education, and a Central Govt representative). The SEC met only in 1988

Supposed to cover 51,000 schools.

13,000 single teacher schools

19,600 required buildings

11,000 required classrooms

Construction was the responsibility of DRDA. Work orders said the construction was supposed to happen in 6 months but there were delays of up to 3 years. No construction agencies were present at district levels and DRDA could not do it. Cost increased with the delays and so the vicious circle continued.

For appointment of teachers, sanction comes from state govt who also identify the schools. But the actual recruitment is done at the District level. In some districts like West Champaran where the BEP had been strong, the teachers were better motivated.

The SEC enlisted materials (13 items to be purchased at the district level). 30% of OB TLM grants was used initially. The rest was put into accounts by the state govt.

Materials were sent to the districts some at a time (not all together). These were stored in rented rooms.

No guidelines on execution were provided, only the basic scheme document was given to the officers. A Dist. Education officer didn't know what to do with the materials. So he had to ask for instructions. The other reason for not knowing what to do was transfer of personnel.

Bihar also had financial embezzlement problems (Director of Primary Education was arrested even). As a result everyone was scared of any kind of responsibility. Head teachers kept all TLM at home to avoid trouble (someone else may steal to put him in a spot).

Books bought were all textbooks and from private publishers.

West Bengal

The educational administration is quite confused. Board of Primary Education (BPE). The District Primary School Council is a decentralised autonomous body responsible for recruitment and transfer of teachers. However, it is managed by political figures (associated with teachers unions who also participate in party activities).

In the last 10 years, there have been barely any teacher appointments and no new schools constructed because of court orders.

- For OB training, SCERT powerless because of the Primary Education Act (which gives power to the BPE and the District Councils). All training has to be approved by the BPE. The DIETS and District Training Institutes report to the Director of Elementary Education.
- No activities in the TTI, no curriculum revision, no in-service training.
- Some teachers say that they have never got any in-service training at all.
- West Bengal can't organise training because of political problems.

- But both sides claim that SOPT was done fully. The %age spent on quality is so their claim that they did do SOPT and PMOST is highly unlikely.
- The little training that happened had OB only for an hour or so... the rest was theory and psychology. No relation between training, curriculum and textbooks.

No details available about construction or teaching practices.

Assam

No difficulty in getting info from the districts.

DPEP making some dent in the practices. The changes are that teacher training is better but no community participation still. VEC training is good where the Sarpanch is a good leader. However, in some places the VEC is non-existent (only there on paper).

SN Prasad – Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Kerala

432 schools were surveyed in Tamil Nadu, only 64 in Pondicherry, and the Kerala study was delayed because it got underway only in November.

SNP reported a very positive picture overall in TN.

- More than 95% of primary schools were actually covered.
- Women teachers were prominent.
- Toilets seen only in Coimbatore district.

30 blocks procured OB TLM directly from the State HQ, and 7 from the District HQ. Initially there was a time gap in the TLM supply but this has improved now because of greater decentralisation with procurement occurring at the block level.

The quality of materials supplied is mixed.

The schools are inspected regularly.

Blocks were more responsive in giving data about OB implementation in districts.

8 blocks have come under other schemes (DPEP).

Overall impressions at block level – excellent 1, good 8, satisfactory 16, unsatisfactory 12.

Govt assisted private schools are smaller in number.

Transport facilities are good.

87% have own buildings

10% have rent free buildings

Reasons for not using OB materials:

- broken materials
- afraid of using for fear of breaking/losing
- some materials not worth using (bad quality/inappropriate for primary school)
- managing comfortably without them
- Factors affecting retention other than OB
- Mid day meal (more effectively implemented in TN as compared to some other states)
- Free uniforms and textbooks
- Good school buildings
- Use of teaching aids other than textbooks

Healthy community participation. 411 VEC members were interviewed.

Although they meet regularly and have a say in matters, not more than 30% were aware of OB. They also have no power to procure land or school buildings. However, they do contribute books etc to the schools.

AKJ raised a few issues when SNP finished his presentation:

- Can the indicators of good management be seen?
- Does coupling of a primary school with an upper primary school result in better facilities and management, since that is common in TN?
- Does any state with efficient administration efficiently utilise whatever resources you give them?

- Is the good performance because of the other schemes which are making a difference in the state by bringing about a change in the attitude?
- Schools are supervised very regularly so perhaps there is greater accountability.
- The culture and work/management ethos of the state may also have a role to play in the efficient implementation of any scheme – and which is why they show results.
- Mathematics teaching may have become better with the OB kit because of the availability of more concrete objects.

By and large teacher training happened according to plan.

Situation seemed healthy and promising. This could be attributable to a silent revolution over the last 10 years without any hype. Possibly because in TN they believe in Doing more than Talking. The enthusiasm of teachers is evident.

In Kerala, quality was not very satisfactory although the numbers are good. Possibly because of high tension between officials / depts.

KK mentioned as an aside that in a study conducted in 1994, non OB schools in TN had better performance than OB schools (but the reason for this could be that the OB schools were very badly off to begin with, which is why they were chosen for OB implementation first).

On the basis of his own experience, JNJ was of the opinion that the Tamil Nadu survey may be positive only on paper and that the ground realities may not be as pleasant. SNP felt that the women investigators he had chosen were very serious and conscientious and as a result the data was as authentic as possible.

Rath – Rajasthan

In Rajasthan, the idea of having a local teacher (which had been discussed earlier as a way of preventing teacher absenteeism and improving teacher accountability) was not very popular in some areas because of in-fighting within the village, and because the

Sarpanch would appoint his own friends/relatives. Some also feel that there isn't as much respect for a local teacher as there is for one from outside.

AKJ responded by saying that if the recruitment is done democratically, then such a problem would not arise.

The districts covered in Rajasthan were Jaisalmer, Ganganagar, Nagaur and Udaipur.

DRDA looked after the construction which has happened in most of the cases. But again no usable toilets.

There was a central purchasing process, where the materials were distributed to the districts. One officer at the Zila Parishad was responsible. He would invite the BEO to collect the materials. So if this officer is good and takes initiative then the materials would reach on time.

- Materials not of very good quality.
- OB materials where available were brand new – they had never been used.
- Teachers complain materials not related to the subjects.

Teacher appointments were made by the District Education Officer.

Schools remained 1 teacher in spite of the appointment of an additional teacher.

Rajasthan has division of authority – on one side there is the Block Development Office and the Panchayati Raj System, but supervising is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (SCERT). DIETs were responsible for conducting OB training.

Several discrepancies between the claims of the officials and the reality as reported by the field team it was found that training was given and that the materials were used although both didn't happen.

SOPT happened but not according to the official figures.

Use of materials during training non existent.

Community not at all aware of the OB scheme.

Social environment in Rajasthan very different – divided on the basis of caste.

1 teacher schools still in large numbers. Teacher and community blame each other.

However, there are exceptions – a village in Nagaur where local teachers were using local materials on their own.

Senapati – Tripura

Very little information and only about one state because the data had not been fully analysed yet.

95% of schools received materials under OB

97% have own building

21% have toilets, but only 1.4% have toilets for girls.

Some of the schools didn't get OB materials because of insurgency in the state.

Schools have 15 to 17 teachers but only 2/3 are regular, the rest are untrained/unqualified politically appointed teachers on partial wages who have been rehabilitated.

Most teachers weren't shown materials during training. And no maps etc are being used even if they are there.

Overall – the government has spent money – physical buildings are there but what is the outcome?

Discussion

Building Facilities

AKJ asked if there was any evidence of the veranda being used as a third classroom or at least as another learning area (which was what the original intention had probably been). PBN said that there was no information on veranda construction in Bihar.

Since OB was an attempt to decide a national norm for physical features of a school, it would be important to see how this norm was implemented. KK added that CBRI, Roorkee had been commissioned to study this aspect.

While considering how the building component should have probably been specified, PBN mentioned a place where although only 40 were enrolled, 80 were present (little brothers and sisters to be looked after, in order to get mid day meal as well). AKJ – wouldn't one huge shed be a better idea? The stipulation of 2 rooms and a veranda is very culture specific (a hangover from the Raj?). KK provided the info that in TN a lot of schools are sheds with partitions for separate classes.

Norm should be more flexible – so much covered area (easier to implement and tailor to individual needs) based on a certain area per child. This way there was no consideration for diversity.

In a sense toilets are also region specific. Example: Ladakh schools have toilets which are being used whereas Lakshadweep has toilets which are not being used because children prefer to go home.

Role of Central and State Govts

Let local planning happen (the structures are supposedly in place for this – but it still doesn't happen) depending on their needs.

States seem to be taking more responsibility now. The ideal situation would be that the states should be competing for central resources and trying to show better performance.

States had a problem with OB. The very nature of the scheme meant that it would not be able to take up the liability.

Centre has to provide the funds for development. The mechanism for central assistance needs to change – should be based on real data rather than someone's ideas.

A new type of financing scheme would have schools

- stating their own development plans
- identifying major bottlenecks
- deciding what resources/strategies they need – what in service training they want.

Give the money to the school for capacity development. In a sense use market forces because the govt can build the capacity of the training institutes as well and then the schools choose who they want the training from. The whole system can be monitored and quality controlled by the govt.

According to KK, something like this is happening in Ladakh because SECMOL and not the DIETs have been asked to work with the primary school teachers.

The role of the central govt should be – Regulating, Facilitating, Financing

Instead of uniform programmes, the govt should think of supporting new initiatives and models which give responsibility to the children and to the community.

Teachers and Para Teachers

China has a contractual decentralised appointment of local teachers – where there is a differential rate for the para teachers. The central govt could have thought of this rather than a blanket scheme where “so many full time teachers should be appointed”.

JNJ asked what the role of the NCTE would be in such a case and should undergraduate courses be vocationalised so that they could also become para teachers?

Dayaram agreed that training of these para teachers is as big an issue because MP appointed 80,000 of them but has no training capacity. Perhaps instead of training, they need better supervision and support for reflection.

Do para teachers work better because of the hire and fire policy – does the insecurity add to the accountability? What other such mechanisms can result in a better system.

Teachers unions are blamed for the job security that teachers enjoy. But there have been instances of unions being encouraged to behave more professionally. These should be promoted.

Teacher Training

DIETs said that they had done the training but the teachers denied this.

PMOST was meant for NPE Orientation.

SOPT was specifically for OB material use (by MHRD after mid term evaluation).

Any component of Multi-grade teaching in SOPT? No reports. Similarly with MLL way of doing the curriculum (how are those textbooks different).

Teaching Learning Materials

No support materials even now. If OB had to be repeated again, a variety of materials should be available freely on the market at competitive prices. The small scale industry should be given encouragement to produce these.

In the pre-independence era, experts certified books which were then picked by whichever schools chose them.

Broad Policy Issues

Suppose OB was meant only as a supply mechanism, and not a full programme. The assumption would be that the centre provides the resources which the states utilise if they have an efficient system.

In general academic quality doesn't work well because the technical support is not taken very seriously (it is different from the line of control which dominated the teachers – in the past, everything was handled by one chain of command).

There are organisational problems (Rajasthan for example) and there is duplication of authority.

These problems have to be brought to the notice of policymakers who can then think about what to do about them. One possibility is the Lok Jumbish type of 'Pravari' who provides local level academic support.

Such positions are already in place – BRC, CRC co-ordinators but these are not effective. Maybe we need to be thinking about how to make them more effective.

According to PBN most CSSs are not functioning well but whatever little is being done may also stop.

SM felt that there is a need to redefine scope of quality because of the kind of diversity that exists. CSSs and centrally conceived decentralised projects are not the solution. However, giving money without earmarking is also difficult because the Centre mistrusts the states.

The need is for central institutions who work with specific cases but not as dictators of schemes and policies (no cascading instructions).

- NCERT should advise on policy on the basis of these cases and research studies.
- NCERT should act as a clearing house and co-ordinator of initiatives according.

- Provide services as facilitator rather than as an implementer of massive programmes. (In the US/China/UK and other countries, Universities play this role of advising schools and local bodies and supporting research, developing academic area expertise).

Support for Jan Jagran Kendra kind of institutions needed (freely available resources/books).

Any scheme should create independent thinking in children and teachers. And one can not just say “make self government” because the capacity has to be there. The media has a role to play in spreading awareness. The policy should be able to encourage this and resolve any conflicts that might occur.

Rather than quantitative scientific methods, maybe qualitative subjective studies with interviews and observations focusing on specific groups may yield more interesting information.

The next stage would probably be to see case studies where one can see – Financial aspects, Management, Legal framework, Role of Centre vs. State vs. Local level.



